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HE PARADISO

OF

DANTE,

TRANSLATED.

43424

BY

ICHABOD CHARLES WRIGHT, M.A.

TRANSLATOR OF THE INFERNO AND PURGATORIO.



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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD DENMAN,

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND,

This Translation

OF THE

PARADISO OF DANTE,

IS

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BY HIS

AFFECTIONATE SON-IN-LAW.

INTRODUCTION.

By a course of allegorical representations, Dante conducts us through the three stages of human existence. —In the Inferno, we witness the misery of sin: in the Purgatorio, the struggles of virtue. Those who have laboured up the hill, — who have surmounted the temptations of this world, and begun to taste the pleasures of the next, are described as enjoying that peace of mind which is imaged by the terrestrial Paradise. It is not, however, in the delights of Eden that the high destiny of man finds its full accomplishment. Verdant bowers and peaceful streams may be the emblem, but are not the reward, of holiness. As through the transgression of Adam all forfeited the blissful state of innocence; so, all who are justified, through the merits of Christ, not only recover the original happiness of their first parents, but are exalted to a higher state of felicity than that from which they fell. The task of the Poet in approaching such a theme becomes more arduous.—In describing the abodes of guilt or of virtue upon earth, he could avail himself of images furnished by his senses; and had a foundation, as it were, for the exercise of his imaginative powers.

But since "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath prepared for them that love him," by what similitude shall be described the mansions of heaven? The attempt indeed may at first appear presumptuous. If, however, in this world we are directed to "walk by faith," and not "by sight;"—if, "where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also," then it surely becomes us to raise our minds to some faint anticipations of the pure and perfect joys of the world to come. Meditating on such subjects, Dante realized in his conceptions the vision of St. Paul; and, "rapt to the third heaven," was favoured with a sight of things which his unaided imagination would have failed to conceive. And although it is perhaps difficult to grasp the full meaning of those burning thoughts which are frequently thrown forth from the mind of the poet, we can scarcely doubt that he was gifted with an extraordinary measure of grace, when we regard the lucid manner in which he has expounded the truths of the Gospel, and opened unto us a vision of superhuman felicity.

He enters upon the subject by declaring at once his intention of describing the glorious kingdom of which he had been vouchsafed a sight.* The novelty of his attempt he freely confesses: nor does he undertake it through any confidence in his own abilities or

* Canto i. 10.

peculiar advantages, but from a strong sense of the privilege of man to hold communion with his Maker.* Hence he combats the fallacy that we are of necessity bound down to earth—vindicates our prerogative of soaring upwards; and declares, that did we not allow ourselves to be acted upon by false pleasures, our tendency would be to an union with Him, in whom "we live and move and have our being."† But since few avail themselves of this high privilege, he warns those "who have not tasted Angel's food betimes," lest they venture to follow him in his sublime aspirations."‡

His elevation is thus described.—Gazing upon Beatrice, he is endued with power to bear awhile the intensity of the Divine Light."§ This so wonderfully increases, that

"Suddenly day seem'd added unto day;" ‖

as though Omnipotence had lighted up the sky with another sun; and he is insensibly translated from earth to heaven.

The first planet, to which in company with his celestial guide he finds himself exalted, is the Moon. —The appearance of its inhabitants, dimly and faintly seen through an atmosphere likened unto clear and

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* Ib. i. 109. † Ib. i. 136. ‡ Ib. ii. 5, 10. § Ib. i. 54.

‖ "E di subito parve giorno a giorno
Essere aggiunto."—*Ib.* i. 61.

tranquil water, is beautifully described;* and the contentment of those to whom this lowest sphere is assigned, proves that however the mansions of heaven may differ in glory,—still, from the universal happiness which conformity to the will of God produces, all form part of one glorious and eternal Paradise.†

In the planet Mercury, to which the poet next ascends,‡ he meets with Justinian, who recites the conquests and successes of the Romans, in order to establish the divine right of the Emperors. Having occasion to mention the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus, Dante is led to the subject of our Saviour's crucifixion, and the redemption of mankind. This he calls "the most sublime scheme that has been, or shall be, from the beginning to the end of the world;"§ and he treats of it with such astonishing clearness and precision, that from a few stanzas may be gathered more solid divinity than from volumes of theological discourses.

The third heaven to which he ascends is Venus;‖— the fourth the Sun.¶ Within the latter are seen glorified spirits, who encompass Dante and Beatrice in two concentric circles, and by a most magnificent simile are compared to a double rainbow.** Having recorded the praises of St. Francis and St. Dominic, they are requested by Beatrice to satisfy the curiosity of Dante as to their

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* Ib. iii. 10. † Ib. iii. 70, 88. ‡ Ib. v. 93.
§ Ib. vii. 114. ‖ Ib. viii. ¶ Ib. x. ** Ib. xii. 10.

own condition. At this request, each star increases in brilliancy; and in the warmth of their charity and benevolence, they break forth into songs of joy, while they dance around their terrestrial visitor. Enraptured with the divine melody, the poet exclaims,

> " He who laments that man on earth must die,
> Ere he can live in heaven, hath little known
> The calm refreshment of the shower on high!" *

A hymn is then sung to the blessed Trinity; when Solomon advancing, informs Dante that the brightness shed around them by the flame of charity is proportioned to the ardour they severally feel — that on resuming their bodies, they will receive an accession of light, to enable them to see God; and that their faculties will be endued with an increased capacity for enjoyment.†

Mounting up to the sphere of Mars, the fifth heaven, Dante now beholds the souls of warriors, who died fighting in defence of the faith, ranged in form of a cross, along which they move to the notes of a melodious hymn. Enamoured of the sound, he forgets awhile even Beatrice herself.‡ Suddenly the spirit of Cacciaguida his ancestor descends, like a shooting star, to the foot of the cross, and fondly addresses him in

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* " Qual si lamenta perchè qui si muoja
Per viver colassù, non vide quive
Lo refrigerio dell' eterna ploja."—*Ib.* xiv. 25.

† Ib. xiv. 58. ‡ Ib. xiv. 131.

language similar to that used by Anchises on beholding his son in the Elysian fields.* Cacciaguida gives a history of his family; and this leads him to contrast the ancient with the modern state of Florence.—

" Florence, confined within that ancient wall,
Whence still the chimes at noon and evening sound,
Was sober, modest, and at peace with all.
No chain, no crown had she,—no dames that drew
Rich sandals on their feet, and clasp'd around
The girdle, brighter than themselves to view.
The father, at his daughter's birth, with fears
Was troubled not, lest she should ask a dower
Too ample, or too early for her years.
No houses then were void of families;
And no Sardanapalus yet had power
To introduce unseemly novelties.
Not yet had Florence in her thirst for fame
Eclipsed the structures of imperial Rome—
Swift as she rose, so swiftly doom'd to shame.
Myself have seen Bellincion Berti pace
The street in leathern belt,—his lady come
Forth from her toilet with unpainted face:—
Have seen, contented in their coats of skin,
The Nerli and the Vecchio; and beheld
Their wives with joyfulness sit down to spin.
O happy they! each sure to lay the head
In her own tomb; and no one yet compell'd
To weep deserted in a lonely bed.
To watch the cradle was the care one chose,
Her child consoling with the self-same word
That hush'd their sires and mothers to repose.

* Ib. xv. 28.

Over the distaff, one the flax would comb,
And tell her family, that wondering heard,
Stories of Troy, of Fiesole and Rome.
As great a marvel had been deem'd, I trow,
A Salterello, or Cianghella then,
As Cincinatus or Cornelia now.
To such pure life of beauty and repose—
Such faithful citizens—such happy men
The Virgin gave me," &c.*—

The subject is one upon which the poet loves to dwell. Hence the ensuing canto is devoted to a continued

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* "Fiorenza, dentro dalla cerchia antica,
Ond' ella toglie ancora e terza e nona,
Si stava in pace, sobria e pudica.
Non avea catenella, non corona,
Non donne contigiate, non cintura
Che fosse a veder più che la persona.
Non faceva nascendo ancor paura
La figlia al padre, che il tempo e la dote
Non fuggian quinci e quindi la misura.
Non avea case di famiglia vote;
Non v' era giunto ancor Sardanapàlo
A mostrar ciò che 'n camera si puote.
Non era vinto ancora Montemalo
Dal vostro Uccellatoio, che, com' è vinto
Nel montar su, così sarà nel calo.
Bellincion Berti vid' io andar cinto
Di cuojo e d'osso, e venir dallo specchio
La donna sua senza 'l viso dipinto:
E vidi quel di Nerli e quel del Vecchio
Esser contenti alla pelle scoverta,
E le sue donne al fuso ed al pennechio.
Oh fortunate! e ciascuna era certa
Della sua sepoltura, ed ancor nulla
Era per Francia nel letto deserta.

lamentation over the degeneracy of his country, and to a description of the peaceful and contented times of old. Cacciaguida then predicts to Dante his exile, and the calamities he is about to suffer from the ingratitude of his countrymen :

" Thou shalt depart, and from each pleasant thing,
Beloved with most affection, be debarr'd :
This arrow first from Exile's bow shall spring.
Thou shalt by trial know what bitter fare
Is bread of others;—and the way how hard
That leadeth up and down another's stair." *

Before Dante quits the sphere of Mars, he is admitted to see the souls of many distinguished Crusaders. A

L' una vegghiava a studio della culla,
E consolando usava l' idioma
Che pria li padri e le madri trastulla :
L' altra, traendo alla rocca la chioma,
Favoleggiava con la sua famiglia
De' Trojani, e di Fiesole, e di Roma.
Saria tenuta allor tal maraviglia
Una Cianghella, un Lapo Salterello,
Qual or saria Cincinnato e Corniglia.
A così riposato, a così bello
Viver di cittadini, a così fida
Cittadinanza, a così dolce ostello
Maria mi diè."—*Ib.* xv. 97.

* " Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
Più caramente ; e questo è quello strale
Che l' arco dell' esilio pria saetta.
Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
Il pane altrui, e com' è duro calle
Lo scendere e 'l salir per l' altrui scale."—*Ib.* xvii. 55.

change then comes over his feelings; and conscious of an accession of spiritual joy, he finds himself translated to the planet Jupiter.* Here are beheld numerous stars, containing the spirits of those who have been distinguished upon earth by their administration of Justice. These presently arrange themselves in form of an Eagle, emblematical of universal government. This allusion to the standard of the Empire, which the Pope was endeavouring to subvert, leads the poet to an invective against the Court of Rome. Proceeding from the consideration of earthly to that of heavenly justice, he vindicates the counsels of God; and passes a severe censure on those who dare to arraign His decrees, and would limit the benefit of our Saviour's death to mankind under the present dispensation.†

Beholding Beatrice increased in beauty, Dante becomes aware of his elevation to the planet Saturn. Here are seen contemplative spirits, ascending a ladder, whose summit reaches to heaven. By a smile from Beatrice he is encouraged to ascend; and is conducted to the constellation of Gemini;‡ whence, looking back through the spheres, he surveys our insignificant globe, and confesses how utterly unworthy it is to engross the attention of immortal beings.§

Summoned before St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, Dante undergoes an examination upon the three cardi-

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* xviii. 69.
† Ib. 109; xx. 94.
‡ Ib. xxii. 101.
§ xxii. 135.

nal virtues, which these three Apostles are respectively supposed to represent.* The confession of his faith having been in the first place made to St. Peter, that Apostle expresses his delight by embracing him three times, and pronouncing a divine benediction.† And it is here worthy of remark, how, amid these high and heavenly scenes, the striking of a single chord in the patriotic breast of the poet brings him back for a time to the things of earth.—That Faith, which obtained such approbation from the angelic host, he had first acknowledged at his baptism in the Church of St. John at Florence. The thought of his native country, from which he had been so cruelly banished, is immediately associated with the hope of his return. He suddenly interrupts the course of his narration; and anticipating the meed of his exertions in the cause of religion, breaks forth into that ardent remonstrance,

" Should it befal that e'er the sacred lay,
To which have lent their aid both heaven and earth,
While year by year my body pined away,
O'ercome the cruelty that is my bar
From the fair fold where I a lamb had birth,—
Foe to the ravening wolves its peace who mar,—
With other voice, with other fleece shall I
Poet return; and at that font be crown'd
Which my baptismal laver did supply." ‡

* Ib. xxiv., xxv., xxvi. † Ib. xxiv. 153.

‡ " Se mai contiga che 'l poema sacro
Al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra,
Si che m' ha fatto per più anni macro,

In his examination by St. Peter, he tells us that he derived his first encouragement to place his hope in God from the Psalms of David; and this confession draws forth the sympathies of the heavenly host. St. John is described as uniting himself to his fellow Apostles, like a modest virgin, who joyfully rises from her seat, and enters the nuptial dance with singleness of heart, intent only on doing honour to the bridal pair.* This beloved Disciple (who rested on the breast of our Saviour, strikingly denominated "our Pelican") attracts the attention of the poet to such a degree, that Dante is deprived of sight, and falls into a trance.† During this abstraction from the things of earth, he is examined by St. John concerning Charity, or the love of God; when, having expressed himself in sentiments that elicit the applause of heaven, he is restored to sight by a look from Beatrice.‡

After an interview with our first parent, he hears a hymn sung to the Trinity, and in an ecstacy of delight exclaims,

Vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
Del bello ovile ov' io dormii agnello
Nimico a' lupi che gli danno guerra;
Con altra voce omai, con altro vello
Ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
Del mio battesmo prenderò 'l cappello,"—*Il.* xxv. 1.

* Ib. xxv. 103. † Ib. xxv. 113, 118.

‡ Ib. xxvi. 76.

" O bliss ineffable, O rapture pure !
O life of love and peace ! O wealth that knows
No wish beyond, unsullied and secure ! " *

St. Peter then addressing Dante gives utterance to an ardent and lofty discourse against the Popes for their venality in selling indulgences—declares that his place in the Church has been usurped by them, and is now vacant in the sight of God—denounces them as wolves in shepherds' clothing, and charges the poet to reveal their wickedness to the world.† Such is the indignation of the Saints at the recital, that heaven is disturbed by an eclipse, similar to that which took place at the death of our Saviour.

The poet is now carried up to the ninth sphere, or heaven of fixed stars, where the Deity is seen, surrounded by the celestial Hierarchy, or nine orders of Angels.‡ The object of God in creating these Beings, who are represented as singing Hosannas, and " blooming in an abode of sempiternal spring," is declared by Beatrice to have been a desire to multiply images and combinations of Himself;—and from the beauty of these " mirrors of the Deity," she argues His boundless perfection."§

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* " O gioja ! o ineffabile allegrezza !
Oh vita intera d' amore e di pace !
Oh senza brama sicura ricchezza ! "—*Ib.* xxvii. 7.

† Ib. xxvii. 22, 40, 52, 66. ‡ Ib. xxviii. 16, 98.

§ Ib. xxix. 13, 142.

All the praises that Dante has hitherto bestowed upon Beatrice would fail, he declares, to give an idea of the superhuman loveliness with which she is now invested, as she ascends with him to the empyrean, or heaven of pure light. Here a glorious vision bursts upon the poet;

"Light I beheld, that like a stream was flowing,
Burnish'd with silver rays, two banks between
In spring's most bright and wondrous colours glowing." *

Out of this river of Life, proceeding from the immediate presence of God, Angels, burning like rubies, are seen to rise. These "living sparks" alight on the bank among the Flowers to which the Saints are compared, and, looking down from above, contemplate themselves in the Divine Effulgence:

"And as a cliff looks down upon the bed
Of some clear stream, to see how richly crown'd
With flowers and foliage is its lofty head;
So all from earth who hither e'er return'd,
Seated on more than thousand thrones around,
Within the Eternal Light themselves discern'd." †

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* "E vidi lume in forma di riviera
Fulvido di fulgòri, intra due rive
Dipinte di mirabil primavera."—*Ib.* xxx. 61.

† "E, come clivo in acqua di suo imo
Si specchia, quasi per vedersi adorno,
Quanto è nel verde e ne' fioretti opimo;
Sì soprastando al lume intorno intorno
Vidi specchiarsi in più di mille soglie
Quanto da noi lassù fatto ha ritorno."—*Ib.* xxx. 109.

Varying the description of the "beauty of Holiness," the poet now compares the assemblage of the Saints to a Rose of purest white, expanding beneath the rays of the Eternal Sun; and, like the leaves of that flower, ranged in concentric circles around the glorious Orb whose light they variously enjoy.* Amid these, Angels are seen ascending and descending, who as they fly between the "Flower and the Fountain of their bliss," impart to them the gifts they have acquired.—Meditating on this blessed scene of peace and love, the poet suddenly contrasts it with the stormy condition of his own beloved country.—"If the Barbarians," he exclaims, on their arrival from the north,

"Beholding Rome and all her buildings vast,
When like the Lateran mortal works were none,
Into extreme astonishment were cast;
I who from earth to an immortal fane
Had pass'd,—from time into eternity—
From Florence to a people just and sane—
What great astonishment belike was mine!"†

Then, as he looks "with searching ken" through the several ranks of the Blessed, he compares himself to a

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* Ib. xxxi. 10; xxxii. 18.

† "Veggendo Roma e l' ardua sua opra
Stupefaceansi, quando Laterano
Alle cose mortali andò di sopra;
Io, che al divino dall' umano,
Ed all' eterno dal tempo era venuto,
E di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano,
Di che stupor dovea esser compiuto!"—*Ib.* xxxi. 34.

pilgrim, who arrived at last before the temple he has long desired to see, surveys it with fond delight, in the hopes of being able, on his return home, to communicate to others the glories he has witnessed.—Beatrice he beholds enthroned far above in the highest circle, and distinctly visible to his sight, though removed to so immense a distance. To her he pours forth his gratitude for enabling him to see all these wondrous things—declares that to her he owes his freedom from the bonds of slavery, and implores a continuance of her protection; so that his soul, some future day, may quit its earthly tenement, purified and approved by her.* By the intercession of St. Bernard with the Virgin Mary, Dante is endued with grace to look upon the brightness of Jehovah;† and offers up a prayer that he may be enabled to show forth to unborn nations some traces of the glory revealed to him. In the profundity of the Divine Light he beholds all that the universe contains —his power of vision gaining force as he prolongs the contemplation, — till, absorbed in the overwhelming glory of the sight, he finds it impossible to turn away.‡ The Trinity he attempts to describe by comparing its appearance to three circles of different hues, but of like dimensions. He then asserts the impossibility of relating all he beheld; and closes his work by informing us, that having reached the height of his desire, his will became wholly swayed by the influence of celestial Love.

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* Ib. xxxi. 90. † Ib. xxxiii. 43. ‡ xxxiii. 97.

ERRATA IN THE TEXT.

Canto v. 136, 137, *for* "herself," "her," *read* "himself," "him."
ix. line 92, *for* "breath," *read* "birth."
xii. 117, *read* "made advance, they wander back."
xxi. 92, *read* "Seraphin."
xxiv. 104, *for* "He alone," *read* "sithence he."
xxv. 12, *for* "round," *read* "around."
xxix. 4, *for* "fail," *read* "fails."
10, *dele* "do I."
53, *for* "was," *read* "were."
59, *read* "Themselves the work of heavenly love confess'd."
xxxi. 11, *read* "they soar again."

PARADISO.

CANTO I.

ARGUMENT.

RAPT to the highest heaven, Dante, gazing upon the sun, experiences a change in his nature, through an infusion of divine grace.

PARADISO.

CANTO I.

THE glory of the Lord, to all things given,
With greater lustre here, with lesser there,
Pervades Creation.—In that sphere of heav'n
Where most abundantly he lends his light,
Was I,—and saw what no one may declare,
Who hath descended from so blest a height:
For drawing near unto our Highest Good,
The intellect to such degree is strain'd,
It cannot by the memory be pursued.
Yet whatsoever of that holy clime
My mind hath in its treasure-house retain'd
Shall now be made the subject of my rhyme.

Make me such vessel of thy might, O thou
  Benign Apollo, and so aid my strain,
  That thy lov'd laurel may adorn my brow:
(One of Parnassus' heights thus far is found
  Sufficient, but I now require the twain,
  Ere with success my last emprize be crown'd;)
Enter my breast, and wake such numbers there
  As when the daring Marsyas thou of old
  Didst from the scabbard of his members tear.
O Power divine! if thou wilt succour deign,
  That I a faint resemblance may unfold
  Of that blest kingdom traced within my brain,—
Thou shalt behold me come to thy loved tree,
  And crown myself with those unfading bays
  Which my exalted theme shall win for me.
For now so rarely poet gathers these,
  Or Cæsar, winning an immortal praise,
  (Shame unto man's degraded energies)
That joy should to the Delphic God arise,
  When haply any one aspires to gain
  The high reward of the Peneian prize.
From little spark may burst a mighty flame;
  And after me perchance with loftier strain
  May other bard response from Cyrrha claim.

Through various openings bursts on mortal eyes
The lantern of our world; but that which joins
Four circles with three crosses best supplies
His light; as, rising by a fairer road,
And happier star, he tempers and combines
The mundane wax in more congenial mode.—
Through such an opening, morn was there display'd,
And twilight here;—that hemisphere was bright,
While all the other was enwrapt in shade;
When Beatrice I saw her eyes upraise,
And on the left confront the sun's full light;—
So never eagle fix'd his stedfast gaze.
As from the first proceeds the second ray,
Reflected, as though heaven again it sought,
Like pilgrim bent upon his homeward way;
So, looking upon her, the while she stood
Contemplative, her very act I caught;
And with unearthly ken the sun I view'd.
Much is accorded in that holy place
Denied us here;—thanks to the abode that erst
Was destin'd to receive the human race.
Not long could I endure the ardent glow;
Yet long enough to see sparks round us burst,
Like unto those from heated iron that flow.

Suddenly day seem'd added unto day ;
As though another sun had in the skies
Been set by Him who rules with boundless sway.
In raptured gaze stood Beatrice, intent
Upon the eternal wheels ; and I—mine eyes
Drawn from the sun, and on her face now bent—
Felt, as they look'd upon her, such emotion,
As Glaucus, tasting of the herb, which made
Him fit companion for the Gods of ocean.
That superhuman change words may not show ;
Then let suffice the example now display'd :—
Grace may hereafter fuller proof bestow.
Whether in spirit only I was there,
Illumed by thee, O Love, that rul'st the skies,
Thou know'st, who raised me to that heavenly sphere.—
What time the wheel thou mov'st eternally
By thy attractive power, had drawn mine eyes
With the sweet harmony attuned by Thee,
The sun so lighted up the heaven, that ne'er
Did lake, augmented or by flood or rain,
Of such a broad and vast expanse appear.
The novel sound and ample light inspired
Desire so strong the cause to ascertain
As never had before my bosom fired ;

When she, to whom were all my thoughts reveal'd
As to myself, ere I my wish could tell,
To calm my troubled mind, her lips unseal'd.
" Fancies untrue have dull'd thy mental sight;
And things, that otherwise were seen full well,
Are thus enveloped in perpetual night.
Thou art not, as thou thinkest, upon earth;
But mountest, swifter than e'en lightning's flame,
Flash'd from the proper region of its birth."
If these her words concise, to me address'd
With smiling lip, my former doubt o'ercame,
Now by another was I still oppress'd;
And said:—" My greatest doubt is at an end;
But yet it wakens in me wonderment,
How through these lighter bodies I ascend.
With pitying sigh her eyes on me were thrown;
And her's was like a mother's gaze, intent
Upon the face of her delirious son.
She then began: " A certain order reigns
Throughout creation's ample space; and this
The world in likeness unto God sustains.
Herein the higher creatures see display'd
The trace of the Eternal Might, that is
The end for which such ordinance was made.

All natures to this heavenly law incline,
  Approaching each according to their kind,
  Some more, some less, unto the Source Divine.
Hence move they on unto their different ends
  Through the great sea of being—each design'd
  To reach the port tow'rds which its instinct tends!
This to the lunar regions fire directs;
  This to the human heart its impulse gives;
  This binds the earth, and to itself connects.
Nor creatures void of intellect alone
  Partake this influence;—with those it lives
  In whom intelligence and love are shown.
The Providence which regulates the whole
  Makes always with its light that heaven content
  In which the heaven of greater speed doth roll:
And thither now, as to a destin'd site,
  Are we impell'd by this instinctive bent,
  Which ever doth to virtuous end invite.
'Tis true, that oft as from the artist's hand
  A form proceeds, not answering his design,
  Because the matter hears not his command;—
So will the creature, moved by adverse force,
  Being free to stand or fall, sometimes decline,
  And swerve, thus tempted, from the appointed course.

(E'en as we see fire falling from a cloud,)
If the first impulse that would mount the sky
To earth is by fallacious pleasure bow'd.
Thou should'st not marvel more, if right I deem,
At thy ascent, than that from mountain high
Down to the lowest plain descends a stream.
More wonder, truly, if thou had'st remain'd
Inert below, although made free to rise,—
Like living fire to creep on earth constrain'd:"
Then unto heaven again she raised her eyes.

PARADISO.

CANTO II.

ARGUMENT.

DANTE warns his readers not to follow him in his adventurous voyage unless they have accustomed themselves to divine contemplations. The first planet he visits is the Moon.

PARADISO.

CANTO II.

O YE who fain would listen to my song,
  Following in little bark full eagerly
  My venturous ship, that chaunting hies along,
Turn, and behold your native shores again;
  Tempt not the deep, lest haply losing me,
  In unknown paths bewilder'd ye remain.
I am the first this voyage to essay;
  Minerva breathes—Apollo is my guide:
  And new-born Muses do the Bears display.
Ye other few, who have look'd up on high
  For Angels' food betimes, e'en here supplied
  Largely, but not enough to satisfy,—

Mid the deep ocean ye your course may take,
My track pursuing the pure waters through,
Ere reunites the quickly closing wake.
Those glorious ones who drove of yore their prow
To Colchos, wonder'd not as ye will do,
When they saw Jason working at the plough.
The innate thirst, which nought may e'er allay,
Of God's blest realm, was bearing us on high,
Swift as ye see the starry heaven make way,—
I, gazing upon Beatrice, and she
Looking above;—and quickly as may fly
An arrow to its rest, so quickly we
Were to an elevated region brought,
Where things of wondrous aspect met my gaze:
Whence she, to whom was known my every thought,
Turn'd to me, glad as beautiful; and said:
"See that a grateful heart to God thou raise,
By whom to this first star we have been led."
Methought a cloud envelop'd us—all bright,
Polish'd, and solid, and of brilliancy
Like diamond sparkling with the solar light.
The eternal pearl receiv'd us, as a ray
In water is received—not parted by
The beams that through its substance make their way.

If I were in the body,—(and in vain
The human intellect desires to know
How one dimension others can contain,)
With greater ardour should we be incited
To see that Essence, which reveal'd, will show
How God and man in substance were united.
That which, not prov'd, through faith we now believe,
Then shall we see, all open to our view,
Like the first truth our youthful minds receive.
I answer'd: "Lady, unto Him I pay
The tribute of my heart—most deeply due,
Who from the earth hath borne me thus away.
But if it please thee, the dark spots explain
Upon the surface of this body shown,
Which cause on earth the fabling tales of Cain."
At this she gently smil'd; then answer'd me:
"If man's opinion be to error prone,
(And sense supplies a most defective key)
Surely thou should'st not quail beneath the stings
Of wonder now, since unto thee 'tis clear
That reason, following sense, hath feeble wings.
But tell me what to thee these shadows seem?"
Then I: "The different colours that appear,
Proceed from bodies dense or rare, I deem."

She then replied: "Full surely shalt thou see
How sunk in error thy belief, if well
Thou list my reasoning to the contrary.—
In the eighth sphere is found full many a star
Differing in size and light, as thou may'st tell,
Judging from what they in appearance are.
If dense or rare brought such effect about,
Distributed in different degrees,
One single influence would prevail throughout;
But different influences needs must owe
Their source to formal principles—yet these,
Save one, thy argument destroy'd would show.
Again, if it were true that rarity
Cause of the darkness on its surface were,
Void in some places must this planet be,
As in a body, fat and lean abound
In different proportions: e'en so here
This volume's leaves to differ would be found.
The sun's eclipse would prove this were it true;
As when one rare is on another brought,
The light thus added shines transparent through.
But this is not the fact; and if I show
The one case false, the other falls to nought;
And thus thy supposition I o'erthrow.

And some impediment there needs must be,
If the light may not through the substance pass,
So that the dense resist its contrary.
Hence is the ray reflected back again,
As colours are reflected from a glass,
Which lead conceal'd behind it doth contain.
Now thou wilt say the beams appear more black
In one place than another ; since the force
That throws them out is seated further back.
Of this thy doubt would'st thou be satisfied,
Experience will instruct thy mind, that source
Whence are the rivers of your arts supplied.
Three mirrors take, and of them move away
Two in like mode, and let thine eye the one
At greater distance 'twixt the two survey.
Then let a lamp behind thee station'd be,
So that its light on all of them be thrown,
And come again reflected back to thee.
Although the distant one not through so vast
A space extend, yet hence thou wilt behold
From all the three an equal radiance cast.
Now as the ground beneath the sparkling snow
Loses its colour, and becomes less cold,
When struck by Phœbus' ardent rays—e'en so

Thy mind, of error disabused, with light
So vivid would I fain illuminate,
That it shall quiver on thy wondering sight.
Beneath the heaven where peace eternal lives
Circles a body, fraught with power so great,
That all within it, motion thence receives.
The heaven that follows, lit with many a star,
Imparts this motion to the essences
Which, though distinct, by it encompass'd are.
Their varied properties each other heaven
Doth variously dispose of, so that these
Are each to their own seed and object given.
Thus do the organs of the universe
Proceed from step to step, as thou may'st see,
Gifted on high with what they here disperse.
Observe attentively how I my way
Make tow'rds the truth so much desired by thee;
That henceforth from the ford thou may'st not stray.
From blest Intelligences needs must flow
Motion and influence to each several round;
As to the hammer from the artist's blow:
And that same heaven with lustrous planets dight
Receives its impress from the mind profound
That rolls it ever through the fields of light.

And as the soul within your clay confin'd,
  Pervades the several members of the frame,
  Which unto various functions are assign'd;
Thus doth the Intelligence with goodness fill
  The orbs of heaven;—though multiplied, the same;
  On its own unity revolving still.
Each different Virtue forms a different union
  With each fair star irradiate by its beams,
  As soul and body hold in you communion.
Shines through each orb the influence diversely,
  Sway'd by the joyous nature whence it streams,
  Like gladness through the pupil of the eye.
Hence is deriv'd the difference that we mark
  'Twixt star and star, and not from dense or rare;
  And this the formal cause, whence light and dark,
Proportion'd to it, on the moon appear."

PARADISO.

CANTO III.

ARGUMENT.

DANTE describes the shadowy forms of certain Nuns seen in the Moon, who having not fully adhered to their vows, are placed in this lowest sphere. Piccarda—Constance.

PARADISO.

CANTO III.

THAT Sun which erst inflam'd my breast with love,
  Truth's beauteous aspect had to me display'd,
  Strong in the power to prove and to disprove:
And I, to avow my error, and confess
  The certainty on which I now was stay'd,
  With head uprais'd was fain my guide to address.
But lo! a vision my intention cross'd,
  Which on itself mine eyes so rivetted,
  The avowal I contemplated was lost.
And as through bright or polish'd glass, or clear
  Transparent stream, so shallow that its bed
  Not darken'd to the observer doth appear,

The features of our countenance are view'd
So dimly, that not pearl on forehead white
Comes to the eye with radiance more subdu'd;
Thus, faces prompt to speak I now beheld;
Whence fell I into error opposite
To that which erst Narcissus' soul impell'd.
Soon as their semblance my attention drew,
Supposing they were merely forms reflected,
I turn'd mine eyes the originals to view;
But nought beholding, call'd them back anon,
Full on the orbs of my lov'd guide directed,
Which, as she smil'd, with holy lustre shone.
"Be not astonish'd that I smile forsooth
At this thy childish judgment," she return'd;
"Thy foot not yet is bas'd upon the truth,
But turns thee back on emptiness again;
True substances are now by thee discern'd,
Who here through failure of their vows remain.
Speak, therefore, and rely on what they say;
For the True Light wherein they ever rest
Doth not permit them from Itself to stray."
Then to the soul who in her looks display'd
Most wish for converse, I these words address'd,
Like one by over-cagerness betray'd.

" O well-born spirit, who in the glowing flood
Of life eternal dost that sweetness feel,
Which, if not tasted, is not understood;
To me it were a boon I well should prize,
Would'st thou thy name and destiny reveal:"
Whereat she promptly, and with smiling eyes:—
" Our charity, like her's to which we aspire,
Who longs her court should all resemble her,
Ne'er bars the door against a just desire.
A virgin sister upon earth was I;
Nor will increase of beauty make thee err,
If thou my features scan attentively;
But thou wilt know Piccarda—blessed here
Amid these others who are also blest,—
Inhabitants of this the lowest sphere.
Enamour'd of the Holy Spirit alone,
We joy to share the mansions of his rest,
And in his pleasure recognise our own.
And this our state, which humble may appear,
Compared with their's on high, doth Heav'n assign,
Because our vows in part neglected were."
" In your most wondrous features," I return'd,
" Is manifested somewhat so divine,
No trace of former likeness is discern'd;

And this the cause of my slow memory : 61
Yet what you tell me now assists me so,
I call you to my mind more readily.
But say, ye blessed ones, to greater height
Aspire ye, that your Maker ye may know,
Or of his face obtain a nearer sight ? "
She smiled ;—her smile the other spirits caught, 67
And answering me, a look so joyous wore,
As though the Primal Love that flame had wrought.
" O brother, charity so calms our will,—
We know not what it is to thirst for more ;
And full contentment every heart doth fill.
To loftier region did we wish to rise, 73
Our wishes would with His discordant be,
Who for our portion gives these lower skies :—
Which may not be, if thou consider well
The real nature of the charity
Wherein 'tis here our destiny to dwell.
Thus 'tis essential to this state of bliss 79
To keep our wills within the will divine,
That ours may be identified with His :
And hence, though divers are the seats we fill,
Each is as pleased as is the King benign,
Who moulds our hearts according to his will.

Our peace is in His will—that ocean vast, 85
Whither all creatures tend—both those that He
Creates, and those by plastic nature cast."
Then was it clear to me that every place
In heaven is Paradise;—though different be
The appointed measure of the heavenly grace.
But as when sated with one sort of meat, 91
And craving still another—for the one
We offer thanks, for the other we entreat;
E'en so did I—and show'd by act and word
My wish to know the thread she had not spun
To its full end;—then this reply I heard:—
"Transcendent purity and stainless worth 97
Have to a loftier heaven exalted Her,
Whose rules are still obey'd upon your earth;
So that her followers may both day and night
Dwell with that Bridegroom who receives each prayer
That charity makes pleasing in His sight.
To follow her, I in my youthful days 103
Fled from the world; and, in her garb array'd,
Promised observance of her holy ways.
Men, prone to evil rather than to good,
Tore me away from the sweet cloister's shade;
God knows the life I afterwards pursued.

This other splendour, seen upon my right,
And on whose form abundantly is shed
From all our sphere continued streams of light,
(What of myself, the same of her I say)
Was, like to me, a sister; from whose head
The holy covering was torn away.
But to the world, when she against her will
Was carried back, close in her heart she wore
The sacred veil, which there she cherish'd still.
Great Constance' light is this; who to the blast
Which second swept o'er Swabia's kingdom, bore
That mighty power, which proved the third and last."
Thus she address'd me—then began to sing,
"Ave Maria," vanishing from view,—
As through deep water sinks some heavy thing.
Mine eyes, which follow'd her till out of sight,
When they no longer could their aim pursue,
Turn'd unto one of more supreme delight,
And wholly gazed on Beatrice; but she
So bright a ray did on my face reflect,
At first I could not bear the intensity;
And hence my eagerness to speak was check'd.

PARADISO.

CANTO IV.

ARGUMENT.



BEATRICE explains Dante's doubts as to the reason why so low a place is assigned to the Saints he finds in the Moon;—viz. that they had not strictly adhered to their vows.

PARADISO.

CANTO IV.

BETWEEN two viands equidistant placed,
  And tempting equally, a man might die
  Of hunger, ere determin'd which to taste:
So might a lamb between the cravings stand
  Of two fierce wolves, and fear them equally;
  So might a dog—a kid on either hand.
Wherefore, forsooth, I neither praise nor blame
  Take to myself, if, urged by equal doubt,
  Silent I of necessity became.
I spake not—but my face a wish portray'd;
  And with more force than had I spoken out,
  That wish to speak was by my look convey'd.

And e'en as Daniel did of old, when he
Allay'd the wrath of the Chaldean king,
Which prompted him to unjust cruelty;
So Beatrice:—"I see thou art possest
By two desires, which into bondage bring
Each other, so that neither is exprest."
You argue: "If a righteous will remain,
Why should the violence by others wrought
Curtail the measure of desert.—Again,
It causes thee to ponder, I discern,
Because men's souls, as erewhile Plato taught,
Seem to their native planets to return.
These are the doubts by which thy will is sway'd
With equal force:—to that which doth appear
The bitterest, shall my answer first be made.
Not he who of the Seraphim doth most
Resemble God, not Moses, John, (whiche'er
You like to choose) or Mary's self, may boast
That they have seats in any other heaven
Than these same spirits thou didst lately see;
Or that to them a longer life is given.
But they all render the first circle fair,
And taste the sweet existence diversely,
As more or less the Eternal Breath they share.

Here they display'd themselves; yet not that here 37
To make their dwelling place these souls intended,
But to acquaint thee with the lowest sphere.
Thus must your understanding be addrest;
Since solely now by sense is apprehended
That which hereafter intellect will test.
To your capacity thus condescends 43
Scripture, to God ascribing hands and feet,
Though nought approaching to them it intends.
Hence by the Church are Gabriel, Michael dight
With human face, and he who left his seat
In heaven, to renovate Tobias' sight.
What Plato in his reasonings had in view 49
Resembles nought beheld in this our clime,
Since what he says, it seems, he thinketh true.
He says that souls to their own star revert,
Believing them thence taken, at the time
When with a mortal vesture they were girt.
And haply what he really meant, may be 55
Of different import from the vulgar sense,
And not to scorn obnoxious;—for if he
Intends unto these circles to impute
The merit or the blame of influence,
With bow not wholly devious he may shoot.

Ill understood, this doctrine led of yore 61
Mankind astray; whence Mercury, and Jove,
And Mars, became the names that planets bore.
The other doubt that in thy mind holds sway
Has less of venom, since it will not prove
Able to lure thee from my side astray.—
That heavenly justice should to mortal eye 67
Appear unjust, affords an argument
To firmer faith, and not to heresy:
But since thy mind has power to comprehend
And pierce this truth, I will thy wish content,
And bring my reasonings to a speedy end.
If violence be, when he who is constrain'd 73
Contributes nought to the necessity,
These souls no real violence sustain'd:
Since will, unwilling, is not to be quench'd,
But, like to fire, persists incessantly,
Though thousand times by violence it be wrench'd.
Therefore, if more or less it bend,—to force 79
It gives assistance;—as did these, who ought
Back to the holy place to have held their course.
For had their will been under their command,
Such as kept Laurence on the bars, and wrought
In Mutius, cruel to his own right hand—

Loos'd from their bonds, they surely had retrac'd
The path whence they had forcibly been rent;
But rare indeed is will so firmly braced.
Thus, if my words be rightly apprehended,
Falls to the ground the specious argument
By which thy soul might oft have been offended.
But now thy mind is crossed by other doubt,
Such, that beneath its troublous weight oppress,
Thou would'st, unaided, have been wearied out.
Falsehood, as I before convinc'd thee, never
May harbour'd be within a holy breast,
Which near the Primal Truth remaineth ever;
Yet from Piccarda mightest thou have heard
That Constance to the veil was stedfast still;
Which now appears to contradict my word.
Oft it befals, O brother, that to shun
A coming danger, we, against our will,
Do perpetrate what should not have been done:
E'en as Alcmæon, too obedient son,
His mother slew, to please his sire; and hence
Impious became, impiety to shun.
Here it is fitting thou should'st bear in mind
That with the will accords the violence;
And such offences no excuse may find.

Absolute will consents not to ill deed—
So far consenting only, as it fears
Lest, drawing back, worse evil should succeed.
Absolute will Piccarda meant forsooth;
Another sense the will I spake of bears;
So that we both express'd ourselves with truth."
Such was the current of that river blest,
Pour'd from the Fountain whence all truth doth flow:
Whereat my doubts were wholly laid to rest.
'O Sovereign dearling of the primal Love,
Goddess," I said, "whose speech inflames me so,
That more and more its genial warmth I prove;
Depth of affection have I not, that may
Sufficient be thy favour to requite:
Let him, who vieweth, and who can, repay.
I see full well the mind can ne'er exist
Content, unless illumed by that True Light,
From which dissever'd may no truth consist.
Therein it rests, like beast within its lair,
Delighted, when 'tis reach'd; for otherwise
All human efforts unavailing were.
And hence springs Doubt, like to a tender shoot,
At foot of Truth:—from height to height we rise;
Since Nature ever prompteth the pursuit.

This doth invite me—this my heart assure
  To ask, O Lady, reverently of thee
  Another question which is yet obscure.
I wish to know if vows defective may
  Cancell'd by other deed of virtue be,
  Which in your balance will not lightly weigh."
Then Beatrice, her eyes divinely bright,
  Sparkling, and full of love upon me threw;
  So that, unable to endure the sight,
Mine from her gaze, bewilder'd, I withdrew.

PARADISO.

CANTO V.

ARGUMENT.

DANTE enters the planet Mercury, or second heaven, where a number of Spirits greet him, and offer to answer his enquiries.

PARADISO.

CANTO V.

"If wrapt in Love's extatic flame, I glow
With splendour, unendur'd by mortal eye,
So that thy powers of vision I o'erthrow,
Be not amaz'd; for this effect proceeds
From perfect view of the Divinity,
Who, nearer seen, to love intenser leads.
Within thy mind now kindled are the fires
Of the eternal Sun—whose beauteous face
But once beheld, for ever love inspires:
And if aught else entice thy love astray,
'Tis but some faint misapprehended trace
Of that same Light, transmitting here its ray.

Thou askest whether broken vows may be
  Redeem'd by other service that has force
  To grant the soul a full immunity."
Thus Beatrice began;—then pour'd along
  The holy strain in smooth unbroken course,
  Like one who checks not the full tide of song.—
"The greatest boon by the Creator given,
  And most conform'd to His benevolence—
  That too, most precious in the sight of Heaven,
Was freedom of the Will, a gift bestow'd
  Upon the creatures of intelligence,
  Who all, and they alone, are so endow'd.
Hence, if thou argue rightly, will the vow
  At its high worth and value be esteem'd;
  If such, that God consent as well as thou:
For in the compact, sacrifice is made
  Of this same treasure, so important deem'd;
  As in the act spontaneous is display'd.
What compensation then can'st thou bestow?
  Would'st thou devote to pious deed thy vows?—
  From stolen wealth thou thinkest good may flow.
One of thy doubts has now been clear'd away;
  But dispensation, since the Church allows,
  (Which seems to contradict what now I say)

Still at the table must thou be a guest; 37
For the harsh food thou hast taken inwardly
Requires assistance, ere it well digest.
Open thy mind to what I now explain,
And store it close; for if thy memory
Retain not what thou learn'st, 'tis learnt in vain.
Unto the essence of this sacrifice 43
Two things belong—the subject matter one,
The other, the agreement;—no device
This last can cancel, and the bond remove,
Save the performance; and what needs be done
Regarding this, hath been enforc'd above.
Wherefore the Hebrews were necessitated 49
To offer, though the gift were changed; as in
The sacred records thou wilt find related.
The other may indeed be changed, nor bring
The Donor into any wilful sin;—
If clearly seen the substance of the thing.
But let not any think, as he may please, 55
To shift the weight that doth his shoulder strain,
Without the turning of the twofold keys:
And on each change the blame of folly fix,
Unless the thing adopted shall contain
The one dismiss'd, as four are found in six.

Wherefore, whatever in the balance weigh'd
Makes by its worth all other burdens rise,
May never be by any service paid.
O mortals, offer not your vows in jest;
Be faithful, nor in rashness blind your eyes,
Like Jephthah, by an erring zeal possest;
Who rather should have said: 'I acted wrong,'
Than greater guilt incur:—thus reckless too
The mighty leader of the Grecian throng—
Her beauty whence Iphigenia wept,
And made the ignorant and the wise both rue
The day when rites so barbarous were kept.
Christians, let stedfastness your actions grace;
Be not like feathers, blown by every wind;
Nor think all water may your sins efface.
The Testaments, both Old and New, ye have;
A Pastor too to guide you is assign'd:
Attend to this—let this suffice to save.
If lust entice you, know that ye are men,
Not beasts, devoid of sense; nor let the Jew,
Who lives among you, hold you in disdain.
Resemble not the lamb in youthful pride,
That, eager still its gambols to pursue,
Runs from the milk, and quits its mother's side."

Thus Beatrice ;—then bearing fond desire
Mark'd on her brow, unto that part she turn'd
Which glows most lively with celestial fire.
Her silence, and the change her countenance wore
Restrain'd my curiosity, which burn'd
Already, and enquiries had in store.
And as an arrow to the mark is driven,
Or ere the cord that sent it be at rest,
So swiftly pass'd we to the second heaven.
Enter'd within the precincts of the light,
I saw my guide's fair countenance possest
With joy so great, the planet glow'd more bright:
And if the very star a smile display'd,
Well might I smile—to change by nature prone,
And varying still with each impression made?
As in some water that is smooth and clear
The fish are drawn to any object thrown
So as to make it like their food appear;
So saw I more than thousand splendours move
Tow'rds us, and every one was heard to say,
"Behold one here, who will increase our love."
And as each soul approach'd us, the delight
It felt, was manifested by the ray
That from within was thrown upon my sight.

Think, reader, if the wondrous history
That here begins, should also terminate,
How painful would thy dearth of knowledge be:
Then may'st thou tell if I were not possest
By strong desire to learn of these their state,
The moment they became thus manifest.
" O well-born spirit, whom grace permits to see
The Thrones of the eternal triumph, ere
Closed is thine earthly warfare ;—know that we
Are kindled by the light which fills the wide
Expanse of heaven :—if thou art fain to hear
Of our condition, be thy wish supplied."
One of those pious spirits thus I heard ;
When Beatrice : " Speak on without dismay ;
And trust, as they were Gods, their every word."
" I see full well how in the light divine
Thou dwell'st ; and that thine eyes a joy display,
Which when thou smilest more serenely shine :
But who thou art, I know not ; neither why,
O worthy soul, a sphere is given to thee,
Hid by another's ray from mortal eye."
These words I spake unto the joyous light
That had been first to address me—whereat she
Array'd herself in splendour still more bright :

And as the sun conceals himself from view
  In the pure splendour of the new-born day,
  Bursting his mantle of the early dew;
E'en so that holy form herself conceal'd
  Within the lustre of her own pure ray;
  And, shrouded closely, to mine ear reveal'd
Words that the ensuing canto shall display.

PARADISO.

CANTO VI.

ARGUMENT.

JUSTINIAN recites the conquests and successes of the Romans, in order to prove the divine right of the Emperors, and the criminality of the Guelfs and Ghibellines;—the one in opposing their government, the other in endeavouring to turn it to party purposes.—Among the inhabitants of Mercury, is found Romëo, the unfortunate Steward of Raymond Beranger.

PARADISO.

CANTO VI.

"When Constantine had turn'd the Eagle back
Against the course of heaven, which it before
Had follow'd closely in Æneas' track;
Above two centuries the Bird of God
His seat maintain'd on Europe's utmost shore,
Near the same mountain where he first abode.
There, 'neath the shade his sacred pinions cast,
Passing from hand to hand, the world he sway'd;
And thus to mine descending, came at last.
Cæsar I was—Justinian now am I,
Who rid the laws, by th' Holy Spirit's aid,
Of all defect and superfluity:

And ere unto that work my mind I bent,
One nature I to Christ attributed,
And rested in the erroneous faith content.
But blessed Agapetus bade me abjure
The error; and by counsel sage he led
My wandering thoughts unto a faith more pure.
To him I gave belief;—and now I view
His doctrine clearly, e'en as thou may'st see
In every opposite the false and true.
Converted to the Church—by God's high will
And favouring grace, I roused each energy,
And strove the mighty labour to fulfil.
Arms to my Belisarius I consign'd;
And turn'd me to repose in peaceful lore,
Seeing the hand of Heaven with him conjoin'd.
To thy first question have I made reply;
But such its nature is, that something more
Must here be added of necessity:—
That thou may'st see how great the blame of those
Who move against the sacred standard—first,
Those who are rang'd beneath it,—next, its foes.
Behold through many a day what deeds renown'd
Have made it rev'renced, from the hour when erst
Young Pallas died, its sovereignty to found.

Thou knowest that in Alba it remain'd
Three hundred years and more, until the time
When three opposed to three the fight sustain'd.
And from the Sabine rape, unto the day
Lucretia wept, thou know'st its deeds sublime,—
Bending the neighbouring people to its sway ;
Thou knowest what by Roman worth it wrought
'Gainst Brennus, and 'gainst Pyrrhus, and the rest,
Chiefs and confederates who with valour fought :
Torquatus whence and Cincinnatus (name
Renown'd for aye) and those compatriots blest,
The Decii and the Fabii, won their fame.
Down to the ground it brought the Arabian's pride,
Who in the train of Hannibal pass'd o'er
The Alpine rocks, whence Padus' waters glide ;
Beneath it, triumph'd in their early prime
Scipio and Pompey :—rudely too it bore
Against the hill, which thou, a boy, didst climb.
Then, near the time when it was will'd by heaven
That all the earth should own one peaceful reign,
To Cæsar's hand, by Rome's command 'twas given.
Its glorious deeds from Var unto the Rhine
Iser beheld, and Era, and the Seine,
And all the vales that tow'rds the Rhone incline.

And when, Ravenna leaving, at a bound 61
It clear'd the Rubicon, it took such flight
Nor tongue nor pen its glory may resound.
Hence it directed back its troops to Spain;
Then to Durazzo turn'd, and so did smite
Pharsalia, that the glowing Nile felt pain.
To Simois and Antandros back its way 67
It sped, and there where Hector lies at rest;
And shook its wings to Ptolemy's dismay.
Thundering, it thence on Juba bent its arms:
Then turning back revisited your west,
Where Pompey's trumpet sounded forth alarms.
Of what he did who next the ensign bore, 73
Brutus and Cassius bark in hell; and thence
Modona and Perugia trembled sore.
Mourns Cleopatra still with grievous throes,
Who, hastening to avoid its violence,
A dark and fearful death untimely chose.
With him it ran e'en to the Red Sea's shore; 79
With him it hush'd the world into a rest
So deep, that closed was Janus' sacred door.
But all the glories that had yet been gain'd,
Or were to be, beneath that standard blest,
Throughout the mortal realm o'er which it reign'd,

Sink into nothing, and become obscure,
If in Tiberias' hands its acts be scann'd
With eye acute, and with affection pure.
For the just God, who doth my words inspire,
Assign'd the mighty task unto his hand
To execute the vengeance of His ire.
Now let my words thy admiration win ;—
With Titus next it hasten'd on to bring
Vengeance for vengeance of the ancient sin :
And when in time the Lombard tusk had gored
The sacred Church—beneath its sheltering wing
Victorious Charlemagne her rights restored.
Now may'st thou form an estimate of those
Whom I before accused ; and clearly scan
How great their crimes, the cause of all your woes.
This 'gainst the public banner doth array
The yellow lilies—this a partizan
Would make it ;—which most wrong, 'tis hard to say.
Let, let the Ghibellines pursue their arts
Beneath some other ensign ; for accurst
Is he who it and equity disparts.
This, let not a new Charles, with Guelphic aid
Abase ; but let him fear the claws that erst
A lion of more lofty bearing flay'd.

Oft do the sons the fathers' penance pay ;
  Nor let him fondly think that out of love
  Unto his lilies God his hand will stay.
This little star with spirits good is rife,
  Who, ever bent upon exertion, strove
  To obtain renown and dignity in life.
When our desires conceive such erring aim,
  Then must the rays of the true Love rebound
  With a less vivid and extatic flame.
But in observing how with our rewards
  Our deeds agree, our joy in part is found,
  Since each with each harmoniously accords.
The living Justice with such even flow
  Our passions hence attempers, that they ne'er
  May any guilty inclination know.
From varied voices sweetest notes arise ;
  Thus do our graduated mansions here
  Amid these wheels form dulcet harmonies.
And in this pearl, so lucidly array'd,
  Shines out Romēo's pure and spotless light,
  Whose great and beauteous deeds were ill repaid.
But the Provençals who against him strove
  Have nought to smile at :—hapless is the wight,
  Ungrateful for another's deeds of love.

Four daughters, and each one of them a queen,
Had Raymond Beranger;—and this had all
By poor Romēo's zeal accomplish'd been.
Yet, moved by slanderous tongues of evil men,
To strict account this Just One did he call,
Who render'd back full twelve for every ten.
He left the palace, worn with age and poor;
And did the world but know how he sustain'd
His hardships, begging crusts from door to door,
Still greater glory had his virtue gain'd."

PARADISO.

CANTO VII.

ARGUMENT.

The words of Justinian, in the last canto, having excited some doubts in Dante's mind respecting our redemption, they are solved by Beatrice.

PARADISO.

CANTO VII.

"HAIL, God of Hosts, enthron'd in regions bright,
Who o'er the Spirits of thy kingdoms blest
Sheddest the abundance of thy glorious light."
From that pure substance such high rapture came,
Unto its own resplendent sphere address'd,
Which glow'd responsive with redoubled flame.
The others danced, as it the measure led;
And, like to sparks that burn and disappear,
Swift in the distance, lost to vision, fled.
Now to myself I mused, with doubt opprest,
Speak to her, speak; and let thy Lady hear;
That her sweet drops may lay thy thirst to rest.

But with that reverential awe imbued,
Which all the letters of her name inspire,
I bow'd to earth, like one by sleep subdued.
Nor long remain'd I so:—for with a smile
That would have comforted one wrapt by fire
Did Beatrice my terror thus beguile.
"To my unerring mind 'tis evident
This is the subject of thy anxious thought,
How vengeance just could meet just punishment.
But soon thy troublous doubts will I remove;
And with such clearness shall my words be fraught,
As may the mighty truth distinctly prove.—
Adam, submitting not that God should place
A salutary curb upon his will,
Condemn'd himself, and with him all his race;
Who thence, infirm and weak, e'en from their birth,
For ages lay in error grovelling, till
The word of God descended upon earth.
Then was the nature that rebellious strove
'Gainst the Creator, in His person join'd
To the Divine by His eternal love.
Now let my argument be understood:—
This nature, as first made, and to the mind
Of the Creator join'd, was pure and good:

But into exile of itself was driven
From Paradise, because it turn'd aside,
Quitting the way of truth, of life, of heaven.
If with the nature then that Christ assum'd
The pain be measured that the cross supplied,
Never was punishment more justly doom'd;
But looking unto Him who bore the pain,
And took our nature on him, no one e'er
Did such an unjust punishment sustain.
To different results one death gave birth:—
God was well pleased,—well pleased the Jews too were;
The Heaven was open'd—tremblings seized the earth.
Then ever be prepared with this solution,
Whene'er 'tis said, a just revenge hath been
Visited by a righteous retribution.
But, wandering on from thought to thought, the mind
Is thrall'd within a subtle knot, I ween;
Whence an escape thou would'st most gladly find.
You say: 'Well comprehend I what I hear;
But wherefore, our redemption to effect
God chose such method, doth not yet appear.'
Brother, this mystery lies deep immured,
And hid from every one, whose intellect
Hath never been by love's warm flame matured.

But I will tell thee,—since this point is sought 61
By many anxiously, and seldom found,
The reason why such mode was worthiest thought.
The heavenly Goodness that all envy spurns,
Beauty dispenses in an endless round,
As, issuing sparks, the Flame eternal burns.
What flows immediate from that heavenly Lamp 67
Endures for aye, since never dies away
The trace once left by its unerring stamp.
What thus immediate from this source is shower'd,
Is wholly free, nor ever may decay,
By secondary causes overpower'd.
Greater the likeness, greater His delight; 73
Since in the object liken'd to it most,
The holy flame glows most serenely bright.
To benefit the human creature all
These things contribute; and if one be lost,
From his nobility man needs must fall.
'Tis sin alone his freedom takes away, 79
And mars his likeness to the Good supreme,
Lessening the warmth of the celestial ray:
Nor doth he e'er his dignity regain,
Unless his guilty losses he redeem,
And pay for sinful joys by equal pain.

When your whole nature in its seed transgress'd,
Not only was it driven from Paradise,
But of these dignities was dispossess'd;
Nor could regain them when it once had lost,
(Search out all modes with skill) in any wise,
Unless the one of these two fords were cross'd:—
Either that God alone should wipe away,
In clemency man's folly; or that he
Should of himself for his own folly pay.
Now, to my words thy mind attentive keep;
And fix thine eye in stedfast scrutiny
On these the everlasting counsels deep.—
Man was unfit (his nature bounded so)
To pay the mulct, because he could not bend,
Obedient, with humility, so low,
As disobedient, high he aim'd to rise;
And this the reason why man could not mend
His fallen state himself in any wise.
Behoved it then that God should lead again
His creature unto life by his own ways;—
Either, I say, by one, or by the twain.
But since the work is deem'd of greater worth,
The more the Agent's goodness it displays,
And manifests the heart that gave it birth;

The Good supreme, whose stamp benign on all
His works is written, chose the twofold way,
Your fallen race from misery to recal.
Nor in the one or other, since the time
The first sun shone—unto the latest day,
Hath been, or shall be, project so sublime.
Giving himself a ransom for mankind,
His bounty God more evidently show'd,
Than if He merely had a pardon sign'd.
And every other mode had wholly fail'd,
As short of justice, if the Son of God
Had not in flesh his God-head humbly veil'd.
But that thy every wish may be supplied,
A former passage will I now explain,
On which 'tis meet thy doubts be satisfied.
'Behold the air, the fire, the earth,' you say,
'And water, with their mixtures, turn again
Into corruption, and swift pass away;'—
And these were creatures;—whence, if true it be
What I have taught thee of their real state,
They from corruption should be ever free.—
The Angels, Brother, and the sphere serene
In which thou art, may well be call'd create;
As in their actual essence may be seen.

But know, the elements you speak of now,
And other things that draw their being thence,
Their power unto created virtue owe.
Create the matter they possess,—create
Was also the informing influence
Within these stars that round them circulate.
All beasts, and every plant with faculty
Of life endued, do from the stars above
Derive their vital power and energy.
But the supreme Benevolence inspires
Our life by means direct, and bids us love
Himself—implanting ever these desires.
Hence for your resurrection may ye ground
An argument, if rightly you reflect
How the first Parents were in Eden found,
Placed there by cause immediate and direct."

PARADISO.

CANTO VIII.

ARGUMENT.

In the planet Venus, the third heaven, Dante meets with Charles Martel, king of Hungary, who had been Dante's friend on earth. He laments that Parents do not bring up their children to those professions to which they are most suited.

PARADISO.

CANTO VIII.

The heathen world (such was their fatal dearth
Of knowledge) erst supposed that Venus' rays
The impulse gave to headstrong love on earth:
Wherefore the nations, who in error stray'd,
Not only join'd to celebrate her praise,
And honour by their sacrifices paid;
But Cupid, and Dione too confest,
As though she were the mother, he the son;
And said he rested on fair Dido's breast.
From her who affords this prelude unto me,
The ancients named the star, that looks upon
The sun in front and rear alternately.

I mark'd not when within that orb divine
I enter'd, but perceived my entrance there,
Seeing my Lady with more beauty shine.
And e'en as in a flame a sparkle shows;
And as distinctly voice from voice we hear,
When, one sustain'd, the other comes and goes;
So other lights beheld I in that light,
Circling with more or less celerity,
As beam'd the eternal vision on their sight.
Never from lofty cloud descended wind,
Or visible or not, so rapidly,
But slow would seem its progress and confin'd,
Compared in speed unto those Lights divine
Which now we saw approaching from that round
Where the high Seraphim supremely shine:
And in the rear of the impassion'd train
Hosanna rang with such extatic sound,
My spirit yearns to catch those tones again.
Then one of those celestials nearer came,
And singly thus began: "To thy control
We all submit;—do thou thy will proclaim.
Partaking the same motion, the same thirst
With the celestial Princedoms, do we roll—
Those powers whom thus on earth ye spake to erst:

'Ye who intelligent, the third heaven move;'— 37
Yet will we rest awhile, if unto thee
It give delight,—we so abound in love."
Then soon as were mine eyes in reverence bent
Upon my Lady's gracious face; and she
Had reassured, and fill'd them with content;
I turn'd again unto the Light that made 43
Such ample promise, and; "Who art thou?" cried,
My voice, by passionate emotion sway'd:
And when I spoke, oh! how divinely bright
That spirit shone—in size how amplified,
Through joy fresh added to its own delight!
Thus beautified, it said: "On earth below 49
But little time I dwelt; and otherwise
Had been avoided much impending woe.
The gladness that around me beams, in cloud
Of dazzling radiance hides me from thine eyes,
Like insect folded in its silken shroud.
Thy love to me was worthily display'd; 55
And had I upon earth been living still,
In more than leaves had been that love repaid.
The left bank which is water'd by the Rhone,
What time it hath been mixt with Sorga's rill,
Me for her Sovereign was prepar'd to own;

Ausonia's horn too, which its towns of pride
(Bari, Gaëta, and Crotona) shows,
Whence Tronto to the sea and Verdë glide.
Already on my forehead shone the crown
Of that fair land through which the Danube flows,
When from its German boundaries it comes down:
And beauteous Sicily (with smoke o'ercast,
Pachinus and Pelorus' rocks between,
Where on the gulf falls Eurus' keenest blast,
By rising steams of pitch with sulphur blended)
Had still her kings expected to have seen
Through me from Rodolph and from Charles descended;
Unless ill guidance, whence is ever stirr'd
A subject people, had not caused the cry,
'Death, death,' throughout Palermo to be heard.
And did my brother the event foresee,
The hungry Catalonian poverty
Would not unto his harm encouraged be;
For surely it behoves him to beware,
Or others for him, lest his bark he sink
By loading her with more than she can bear.
Degenerate, and of his sire the reverse,
He needeth other troops than those who think
Of nought but how they best may fill their purse.

Wherefore, the joy thy words impart to me
Is much increased, my Lord, to think that where
Each good begins and endeth—there by thee
'Tis seen, as seen by me; and hence delight
O'erwhelms me also—that thou seest it there,
Where God affords a mirror to thy sight."
"Thy words have made me glad; and since a doubt
They have produced, do thou that doubt erase;
Namely, how bitter seed from sweet may sprout."
Thus I: he answer'd: "Let me impress thy mind
With but one truth—I will before thee place
That which at present thou dost view behind.—
The Good Supreme, who motion doth dispense,
And bliss through heaven, endues these bodies vast
With power to act as his own Providence:
Nor doth that prescient and self-perfect Mind
Consult the natures only, but forecast
To ensure the permanency of each kind.
Hence whatsoe'er this bow takes aim at, lies
Within the reach of its unerring dart;
As arrow to its destin'd object flies:
Which, were it not the case, these heavens would show
The effect in exhibitions, not of art,
But of destruction:—which may not be so,

Unless the Intelligences which direct
These stars, defective are, as also He
Who first originated their defect.
This truth more clearly shown wouldst thou desire?"
"Not now," I said; "since nature well I see,
In her important functions cannot tire."
He then return'd: "Would it be worse for man
With social feelings were he not endued?"
"Yes," was my answer, "and the cause is plain."
"And can he in such social converse dwell,
Unless with divers qualities imbued?"
"No, if thereon your master judges well."
Thus far the spirit his deductions drew,
And then concluded: "Different if then be
The effects, the causes must be different too.
Hence one is born a Solon, Xerxes one,
This a Melchisedec, another he
Whose flight through air brought ruin on his son.
The circling nature, which the mortal wax
Tempers, makes not one family the same;
And yet it never doth its arts relax.
Hence the twin brothers differ'd so of yore,
Jacob and Esau—and Quirinus came
From sire so vile that Mars the credit bore.

The nature of the son would ever be
  Like to the sire, if heavenly foresight had
  Not warr'd against such uniformity.
What was behind thee, now before thee lies;
  But still a corollary will I add,
  To show how favour'd art thou in mine eyes.
Thwarted by fortune, nature never thrives,
  Stunted in growth, like every other seed
  That 'gainst an uncongenial climate strives:
And did unthinking mortals upon earth
  To nature's everlasting rules give heed,
  There would be no complaint of lack of worth:
But him most suited unto war, ye teach
  His wit to sharpen in religion's cause;
  And make a king of him most fit to preach;
Reversing nature's fundamental laws."

PARADISO.

CANTO IX.

ARGUMENT.

CONTINUING in the planet Venus, Dante holds converse with several spirits—Cunizza—Folco—the Provençal Poet.—He reproves the Pope for his neglect of the Holy Land.

PARADISO.

CANTO IX.

As soon as thy loved sire, Clemenza fair, 1
Had clear'd my doubts, the evils he foretold
That his posterity were doom'd to bear.
"But hist, and let the years roll on," he said;
"Know this—(for more 'tis not for me to unfold)
Just retribution shall not be delay'd."
Now had the spirit of that light divine 7
Turn'd to the Sun, which fills it with content,
That Good Supreme, tow'rds all his works benign.
Ah, miserable souls infatuate!
Whose thoughts on vanity are ever bent,—
Your hearts averted from a good so great!

And lo, another of those splendours, glowing
With joy unwonted, now approached in sight,
Desire to please me by its radiance showing.
The tranquil eyes of Beatrice, intent
Upon me as before, with fond delight,
Gave to my wish untold a kind assent.
" Ah ! may my prayer, blest spirit, soon be brought
Unto its aim," I said ; " and let me obtain
Proof that on thee I may reflect my thought."
Whereat the light that still to me was new,
Forth from the depth whence issued its late strain,
Answer'd, like one that joys good deeds to do.
' Within that region of Italia's land
Depraved, 'twixt Venice and the source whence flow
Brenta's and Piave's streams on either hand,
Rises a hill, nor rises to great height,
Whence erst a torch descending, fraught with woe,
Assail'd the country with impetuous might:
From the same root we both derived our birth—
My name Cunizza, here ordain'd to shine,
Since by this star was I o'ercome on earth.
But joyous I sustain my present lot,
Nor for the faults that brought me here repine;
Although the vulgar comprehend it not.

This dear and shining gem, that in our heaven 37
Is nearest me, behind it left a name
That shall not to forgetfulness be given
Five hundred years to come.—Then bear in mind
How eagerly should man aspire to fame,
Since this first life another leaves behind.
Heeds not such argument the multitude 43
'Twixt Adicë and Tagliamento's tide;
Nor yet by suffering are their hearts subdued:
But with the blood of Padua—(lost are so
Her sons to duty—)shall the stream beside
Vicenza soon with alter'd colour flow.
And where meet Silë and Cagnano—there 49
One domineereth with such lofty head,
That now for him preparing is a snare.
For her fell Pastor's fraud shall Feltro weep—
Fraud more detestable than ever led
The culprits unto Malta's dungeon keep.
Large must the vessel be which should contain 55
Ferrara's blood; and wearied be the man
Who weigh'd it ounce by ounce; and yet for gain
This courteous priest such presents will not spare,
To prove himself a zealous partizan;—
For gifts like these are customary there.

Above are mirrors, (Thrones ye term them) whence 61
God's judgments are reflected unto us,
So that our words fail not of evidence."
Ceasing to speak, she now the semblance bore
Of one engaged in somewhat else; and thus
Took on the wheel her station as before.
Known to me now, that other joyous light 67
Array'd itself in robe of wondrous glow,
Like ruby with the sun's effulgence dight.
In those high realms is splendour born of gladness,
As smiles on earth; but in the abyss below
The outward form grows dark from inward sadness.
"God seeth all, blest spirit: and in Him 73
Thy sight is quicken'd, so that his desires
Never," I said, "can unto thee be dim:
Thy voice then, which delights the realm of heaven,
In concert tuned with those adoring Fires
To whom six wings are as a raiment given,
Why doth it not to my behest incline? 79
I should not wait thy question, did I scan
Thy thoughts as clearly as thou scannest mine."
"Of all the vales wherein are waters pent,
The largest" (thus the happy soul began)
"Except the sea that girds the continent,

Between discordant shores so long a way
Against the solar course is lengthen'd out,
It makes meridian where the horizon lay:
Upon that valley's shore did I reside,
'Twixt Ebro's stream and Macra's, whose short route
Doth Tuscany from Genoa divide.
Beneath the same meridian Buggia lies
As doth the land from whence I drew my breath,
Whose port was stain'd of yore with sanguine dyes:
Folco my name with those who knew me best;
And as this heaven impress'd me when on earth,
So now in turn by me is it imprest.
Not Belus' daughter burnt with fiercer flame
(Whom both Sichæus and Creusa rue)
Than I, as long as love my age became:
Nor she, deluded by Demophoon,
The maid of Rhodope, herself who slew;
Nor he whose heart the fair Iole won.
Not that we here repent:—for no offence
Is here recall'd; but joyous we behold
The foresight and the skill of Providence.
Here we admire the art which turns to good
Such passion, and the wisdom manifold,
Whence earthly love by heavenly is subdued.

But that thy wishes, unto which this sphere
Has given birth, may all contented be,
I must not rest my explanations here.
You wish to know who dwelleth in the rays
Of this fair light, that sparkles near to me,
Like sunbeam that in tranquil water plays.
Know that within it Rahab peace obtains,
And to our order join'd, amid the blest
Of highest rank, supreme distinction gains:
For first of souls was she who in this sphere
Whereon the shadow of your earth doth rest,
Partook Christ's triumph, and gain'd honour here;
(Became Him that in heaven be somewhere left
A trophy of the victory He bought,
When on the cross his either hand was cleft;)
Because she favour'd the first glorious deed
By Joshua in the land of promise wrought;
That land of which the Pope takes little heed.
Thy city (hateful plant of him who first
On the divine Creator turn'd his back,
And sow'd the seeds of envy) the accurst
Floren produced and issued; whence have stray'd
The sheep and lambs away from the right track,
Since of the shepherd it a wolf hath made.

For this the Gospel now is laid aside,
The Fathers too; and the Decretals sought
Alone, as by the margins is descried.
To these both Popes and Cardinals are given;
Nor wanders e'er to Nazareth a thought,
Where spread his wings the Messenger from heaven:
But soon the Vatican, and places most
Throughout the city dear to memory,
(Wash'd by the blood of Peter's faithful host)
Shall from the foul adulterer be free.

PARADISO.

CANTO X.

ARGUMENT.

Ascent to the Sun, or fourth heaven. Dante is encompassed by a wreath of spirits. Thomas Aquinas, one of these, declares the names of the rest.

PARADISO.

CANTO X.

VIEWING his offspring with that fervent love
  Which ever from the Sire and Son proceeds,
  The First Great Cause of all below—above—
Hath in such perfect order wrought the whole,
  That he who contemplates these wonders, needs
  Must feel the Godhead thrill his inmost soul.
Raise then thine eyes, O reader, following mine,
  Up to the lofty wheels, that I may show
  Where the two motions, link'd in one, combine:
And then become enamour'd of the art
  Of the Great Master, who admires it so—
  His eyes, delighted, never thence depart.

See how the Zodiac is extended thence,
  Whereon are borne the planets, that they may
  Supply the earth, which asks their influence:
And did they not through heaven obliquely run,
  Much starry virtue would be thrown away,
  And many a motive power on earth undone.
And were or more or less the obliquity,
  Greatly defective would that order be
  Which reigns below, and in the realms on high.
And now, O reader, on thy bench recline,
  Pondering the feast that is prepared for thee;
  So will delight, not weariness, be thine.
Feed now;—before thee have I placed the fare;
  For that which I have task'd myself to write,
  Demands from me my undivided care.
Nature's great Minister, whose ray sublime
  Imprints the world below with heav'n's own might,
  And regulating all things, measures time,
Entering the sign that has been named before,
  Amid these spires his circling journey ran,
  In which each day he advances more and more:
And I was with him; nor perceiv'd I ought
  Of my increas'd ascent, more than a man
  Perceives, ere it arise, his primal thought.

But wonder not; for Beatrice is she
Who leads from good to better with such speed,
That not by time her act exprest may be.
To tell what forms, self-radiant on my sight
Shone in the sun, distinguish'd not indeed
By different hue, but by their greater light
(Though art, though genius should my pen inspire
To aid the imagination) were in vain;
But Faith may yet conceive, and Hope desire.
Nor is it wondrous if our fantasies
Unequal be such lofty height to gain;
Since o'er the sun soar'd never mortal eyes.
Such the fourth mansion of the Holy One,
Who ever doth its happiness renew
With His own Grace, proceeding from His Son.
And Beatrice began: "Thy thanks be given—
Thy thanks unto the Sun of Angels, who
Hath raised thee to this bright abode in heaven."
Never was heart of man so wholly brought
Through heavenly love and through desire unmix'd
To render up to God its every thought,
As I, soon as these words my bosom thrill'd;
And all my affection was on Him so fix'd,
That Beatrice no more my spirit fill'd.

Nor ought displeased was she; but as she smiled,
Such brightness from her radiant eyes came down,
My mind from that sole object was beguil'd.
Round us, as round a centre, I beheld
Full many a living lustre form a crown,
Whose vocal sweetness e'en their light excell'd.
Oft cinctured thus Latona's daughter reigns,
What time so charged with moisture is the air
That she the texture of her zone retains.
In Heaven's high court, whence I my steps retrace,
Are many precious gems serene and fair,
Which may not be extracted from their place;
And like to these was that celestial strain.
Vain, without plumes to seek such melody,
As to seek tidings from the dumb were vain.
These glowing suns, thus pouring forth the song,
Around us circled thrice, as in the sky
Whirl stars that unto steady poles belong.
Ladies they seem'd, not from the dance set free,
But pausing for new notes,—with fond desire,
Until they catch them, listening silently:
And words like these from one of them I heard:
"Since the bright ray of grace (whence love's true fire
Once kindled, to fresh warmth is ever stirr'd)

Such ardent glow unto thy spirit lends,
That it conducts thee upward by that stair
Which every one remounteth who descends;
He is not free (unless a stream be free
That runs not seaward) who denies a share,
In this thy thirst, of his own wine to thee.
You wish to know what flowers this wreath compose,
View'd by that Lady with admiring gaze [shows.
Who gives thee strength, while heaven's high path she
One of the lambs of that blest flock was I
Which Dominic so leads in righteous ways,
They thrive, unless they fall through vanity.
He who is nearest to me on the right
Was Albert, my erewhile instructor—who
Came from Cologne: Aquinas am I hight.
And would'st thou know the names of all the rest,
Turning thine eyes as I direct thy view,
Look up throughout the garland of the blest.
From Gratian's smile that other flame doth rise,
Who to both forums such assistance bore,
That favour he obtains in Paradise.
The other, of our choir the ornament,
Was that Lombardo, who, like her of yore,
To holy Church his treasure did present.

The fifth light, fairest amid all our fires,
Breathes forth such love, that all the world below
To gain some knowledge of its fate desires:
Within it is that luminary seen,
Which Heaven so richly did of old endow,
If truth be truth, its like hath never been.
Nearer, that radiant taper meets thy view,
Who in the flesh, the nature and the state
Of Angels with acutest vision knew.
Now in that other little light behold
His smile, of Christian fanes the advocate,
From whom Augustin took his lore of old.
Now if thy mental eye conducted be
From light to light, as I resound their praise,
The eighth well worth attention wilt thou see.
Within it dwells, all excellence beholding,
The soul who pointed out the world's dark ways;
To all who listen its deceits unfolding.
Beneath in Cieldauro lies the frame
Whence it was driven;—from woe and exile, to
This fair abode of peace and bliss it came.
Flaming beyond, the ardent spirits scan
Of Isidaurus, Bede, Riccardo, who
In judgment may be deem'd as more than man.

This flame, from whom to me reverts thine eye,
  Is one, who, pondering mortal follies, thought
  That death's approach was made too tardily,—
Sigieri's clear and everlasting light;—
  Who in the street of straw as erst he taught,
  Raised by the truths he told, invidious spite.
Then, like a clock that summons us away,
  What time the Spouse of God at matin hour
  Hastes to her Husband, for his love to pray,—
And one part urges on the other, sounding
  Tin Tin in notes so sweet, that by its power
  The soul is thrill'd, with pious love abounding;
So I beheld that glorious circle move;
  And with such sweet accord and harmony
  Take up the song of praise, as none may prove,
Save where is joy through all eternity."

PARADISO.

CANTO XI.

ARGUMENT.

Dante exclaims against the vanity of earthly pursuits, on the occasion of Thomas Aquinas continuing his speech against the modern Dominicans, in which a history is given of St. Dominic and St. Francis.

PARADISO.

43424

CANTO XI.

O THE insensate labour men bestow
  On worldly things!—how weak those reasonings are
  Which make them stoop their wings to earth below.
One was pursuing medicine,—one a course
  Of law;—the Church employ'd another's care;
  One strove to rule by sophistry or force:
One was on wicked gains by fraud intent;
  By merchandise another; this one given
  To fleshly joys, on ease another bent;—
When I, from all these earthly cares relieved,
  With Beatrice ascending into heaven,
  Was in that sphere so gloriously received.

And in the circle, when each one had taken
The station which it occupied before,
Like candle in a candlestick, unshaken,
Within that light which first address'd me, while
Its brightness was increasing more and more,
I heard these accents utter'd with a smile:
" As looking on the Eternal Light I burn,
So in the lustre of its glowing ray
Do I the reasonings of thy mind discern.
Thou doubtest, and would'st have me frame my speech
So clear and undisguised, that what I say
The level of thy reasoning powers may reach.
Where lately, I observed, 'They thrive;' and where
I also said, 'Its like hath never been,'
There a distinction must be drawn with care.
The Providence, inscrutable and wise,
Whose counsels are more deep than may be seen
By utmost stretch of mortal faculties;—
To the intent and holy end that She,
Whose spousals were confirm'd with cries and blood,
(Herself secure and firm in faith) might be
More closely to her loving one allied—
Appointed two Conductors, each endued
With heavenly strength, to be to her a guide:

Effulgence like the Seraphim one show'd ; 37
The other—such his wisdom upon earth—
Like to the Cherubim in lustre glow'd.
Of one will I discourse, since of the two,
In praising one, do I declare the worth ;
For both preserved the self same end in view.
Betwixt Turpino, and the stream descending 43
Down from the hill where Ubald lov'd to live,
A fertile tract is from the mount depending ;
Whence doth Perugia suffer heat and cold,
Through Porta Sole ; and behind them grieve
The slaves that Nocera and Gualda hold.
On that side where the mountain falls away 49
Most gently, to the world a sun was born,
As from the Ganges springs the solar ray ;
Whoso would therefore call the place aright,—
Let it no longer of its fame be shorn,
And Orient, not Ascesi, be it hight.
Not long the period from his glorious birth, 55
When, with extraordinary virtue blest,
This wondrous Sun began to comfort earth ;
Bearing, while yet a child, his father's ire,
For sake of her whom all as death detest,
And banish from the gate of their desire.

Before the spiritual court, before 61
His father too, he took her for his own;
From day to day then loved her more and more.
Twelve hundred years had she remain'd, deprived
Of her first spouse, deserted and unknown,
And unsolicited till he arrived.
Nor did it aught avail, that at the sound 67
Of that dread voice, which all the world dismay'd,
She, with Amyclas, fearless still was found.
Nor aught avail'd the unshaken hardihood,
Which, up the cross ascending she display'd,
While at the foot the Virgin mother stood.
But lest my language be not clearly seen, 73
Know, that in speaking of these lovers twain,
Francis and Poverty henceforth I mean.
Their joyful looks with pleasant concord fraught,
Where love and sweetness might be seen to reign,
Were unto others cause of holy thought;
So that the sainted Bernard first began 79
Barefoot to run in quest of bliss so sweet;
Yet seem'd to advance too slowly, though he ran.
(O unknown riches, O true source of good!)
Egidius and Sylvester, with bare feet,
Pleased with the Bride, the Bridegroom next pursued.

Thence, with his Spouse, and with the holy train
Which, following him, had put the girdle on,
That Lord and Father did his way maintain.
Nor aught to waver was his courage seen,
That he was son of Peter Bernardon,
And in appearance wonderfully mean;
But with a royal spirit he reveal'd
His hardy purpose unto Innocent,
Who first the vow of his religion seal'd.
And when augmented was the lowly train
That follow'd him with poverty content,
Whose wondrous life deserves an Angel's strain,
The leader of this venerable band
His wish saw crown'd again successfully,
Through the Holy Spirit by Honorius' hand.
Then, as by thirst of martyrdom impell'd,
In the proud presence of the Soldan, he
Preach'd Christ, and those his doctrines who upheld.
Finding the people yet unripe to bear
Conversion, he, impatient of delay,
Turn'd back again, the Italian fruit to rear.
In mount Alverna, on the rigid stone,
(Last seal of Christ) that penance did he pay,
Whose marks upon his limbs two years were shown.

When God was pleased unto Himself to take
So true a servant, and reward the cares
Of one devoutly humble for his sake,
His dearest Lady recommended he
Unto his brethren, now his rightful heirs,
And bade them love her with fidelity:
And from her breast with joyfulness took flight
His glorious spirit, as it homeward hied;
Nor for his body ask'd he other rite.
Judge now of him who was esteem'd to be
A Colleague fit St. Peter's bark to guide
Through the dark billows of a stormy sea:
Such was our Patriarch.—Wherefore he is wise
Who shapes his course as he has led the way,
Laden alike with goodly merchandise.
But now so greedy are his flock become
Of novel food, they needs must go astray
To seek new pastures far away from home:
And in proportion as they quit the track,
Which they were erst accustomed to pursue,
Emptier of wholesome food do they come back.
Some, fearing harm indeed, for safety's sake,
Draw to their Pastor's side; but these so few,
That little cloth would all their mantles make.

Now, if thou hast gain'd profit from my word; 133
If with attention listen'd unto me;
And thou remember well what thou hast heard,
In part, at least, thy wish will be content;
Since of these splinters thou the root wilt see;
And the Dominican learn what is meant,
By that 'which thrives if free from vanity.'"

PARADISO.

CANTO XII.

ARGUMENT.

THOMAS AQUINAS having finished the history of St. Francis, Bonaventura commences that of St. Dominic. These two saints are declared to have been specially sent by Christ as Champions of the faith.

PARADISO.

CANTO XII.

Soon as the blessed flame drew near the bound
  Of its discourse,—spontaneously impell'd,
  The sacred Mill began to turn around:
Nor had it made one revolution yet,
  Ere, circling it, another I beheld—
  While step and song in mutual concert met;—
Song, as superior to our humble Nine,
  And which as far our Siren's doth excel,
  As primal light reflected doth outshine.
As when her handmaid, Juno summons, rise
  Two arches of like hue and parallel,
  Drawn out on dewy cloud athwart the skies—

The outer springing from the inner one,
  Like to the voice of that fair Nymph who stray'd,
  By love consumed, as vapours by the sun;
(Whence men on earth a sure reliance found
  Upon the covenant with Noah made,
  That never shall again the world be drown'd)
E'en so the twofold Garland turn'd to us,—
  Of roses form'd, that bloom eternally;
  And one with other corresponded thus.
Soon as the sound of dance, and song, according
  To such glad movement, and the revelry
  Of light to light fresh brilliancy affording,
With one consent were in a moment still,
  Like eyes whose movements simultaneous are,
  Opening and shutting at the mover's will;—
From one of those new splendours came a sound;
  Whence, e'en as turns the needle to the star,
  To see its whereabout, I turn'd around.
It then began: "The love which makes me fair
  Wills that by me that other Chief be named,
  Who glory here obtains in equal share.
Memory the record of the twain should keep;
  That as in holy warfare both were famed,
  Both a like harvest of renown should reap.—

Christ's blessed army, which to reunite 37
Cost him so dear, was now advancing on,
Tardy and few, and ill prepared for fight;
What time the Eternal King provision made
For his endanger'd host, through grace alone,
Not for their merit;—and (as hath been said)
Raised up two champions to his Bride's relief, 43
Who, both in argument and action bold,
Gather'd the scatter'd people to their Chief.
In that fair clime where springs from out the west
The gentle wind that bids the leaves unfold,
Whence Europe sees renew'd her flowery vest,
Not distant from the beating of the waves, 49
In rear of which at times (his ardour stay'd)
The setting sun his ample forehead laves,
The happy Callaroga hath her site
Beneath the massy shield's protecting shade,
Where yields one lion, one displays his might:
There the courageous loving Knight arose 55
Who wrestled for the Christian faith; and though
Kind to his own, was dreaded by his foes.
And in his mother's womb, by nature fraught
With living virtue, was he furnish'd so,
To her the arts of prophecy he taught.

What time 'twixt him and Faith completed were
The espousals at the sacred font, where they
Enrich'd each other with a dower most rare—
She who for him gave answer, in her sleep
Saw the rich fruit that on a future day
The world from him and from his heirs should reap:
And that his mission high might be proclaim'd,
Through th' inspiration of the Spirit, he,
From his Possessor, Dominic was named;—
For he was wholly His.—With patient toil
He in Christ's garden wrought incessantly,
A chosen help to cultivate the soil.
He seem'd indeed the trusted friend of Christ,
For the earliest wish and love that he display'd
Was after the first counsel given of Christ.
Awake, yet silent—stretch'd upon the earth
His nurse oft found him; e'en as if he said,
'This is the destin'd object of my birth.'
Happy his father, truly Felix hight!
O mother, justly also call'd Joanna!
If the interpretation given be right.
Not for the honours of the world he strove,
Studying Ostiense; but the real manna,
Which others disregard, so waked his love,

He soon pre-eminent in learning shone;
And in that vineyard sedulous became,
Whose verdure through neglect is quickly gone;
Nor of the See, that erst her bounties gave
Unto the godly poor, (not her's the blame,
But his, who doth the holy seat deprave)
Asked dispensation for unrighteous gain,
Nor the first benefice that might befal;
Nor tithes, the poor's possession, sought to obtain;
But 'gainst an erring world craved leave to fight
For that blest Seed, whence won their glory all
The Plants that gird thee with a zone of light.
With learning and determin'd will, his course
Of apostolic duties he began;
Like torrent gushing from a lofty source.
And wheresoever most prevail'd the stocks
Of heresy, full ardently he ran,
Directing there his most impetuous shocks.
From him did many streams their source derive,
Watering the universal garden thence;
So that his little trees the better thrive.
If such, one wheel of the resplendent car,
Wherein the Church advanced to her defence,
And drove victorious in her civil war,

The excellence of the other should full well
Be evidenced, of which, before I came,
Aquinas was so courteous as to tell.
But the old mark which the circumference wore,
With that frequented now is not the same:—
The generous crust is generous now no more.
His family, which follow'd in the track
His footsteps made, are gone so far astray,
That where he once advanced, they backward move.
But to this evil crop shall quickly come
The harvest, when the tares shall rue the day,
And from the barn excluded, meet their doom.
He who would search our volume's every fold,
In some few pages still perchance might read,
'I am the same I ever was of old:'
But comes not from Casale such an one,
Or Aquasparte;—those the text exceed,
Making it stricter—these would keep to none.
Buonaventura's soul am I, who came
From Bagnoregio, and with pure intent
Preferr'd each heavenly to each earthly aim.
Agostin, and Illuminato here—
First of those poor ones who barefooted went,
And in the cord by God accepted were.

Ugo is here, and Peter Mangiadore,
  Peter of Spain with his twelve volumes too;
  And with them Nathan, prophet famed of yore.
There Chrysostom the metropolitan,
  Archbishop Anselm, and Donatus, who
  In the first rudiments instructed man.
Raban is here; and by my side see him
  Endow'd with soul of heav'n-taught prophecy—
  Calabria's famous Abbot Joachim.
Of such a champion to record the praise
  Have I been moved by the warm courtesy
  Of Friar Aquinas, and his goodly phrase;
Which also moved this circling company.

PARADISO.

CANTO XIII.

ARGUMENT.

THOMAS AQUINAS continuing his speech, shows that when he said of Solomon, "his like hath never been," he spoke of him as a king only—and in no way affecting the superior attributes of our Saviour.

PARADISO.

CANTO XIII.

LET him who would conceive what met mine eye,
  And stamp the image that I fain would trace
  Fixt as a rock within his memory,
Imagine fifteen stars selected out
  Of heaven's expanse, so vivid as to chase
  All gloom away, and darkness put to rout;—
Imagine the great Bear, which day and night
  Bides in our heaven, and, as its circles roll,
  Remains still visible to mortal sight;—
Imagine too the opening of that horn,
  Which springs uprising from the very pole,
  Round which the primum mobile is borne,

In twofold signs arranged along the sky,
After the manner Ariadne taught,—
What time she felt herself about to die—
The one the other's rays encompassing,
And each in circles of such fashion wrought,
That one within the other forms a ring—
And thus a shadowy outline will be found
Both of the twofold dance, and chaplet bright
Which circled, where I stood, the Point around.
For earthly beauty is exceeded there;
E'en as the heav'n that whirls with swiftest flight
Is with Chiana's stream beyond compare.
No Pæan there, or Bacchic song they raise;
But the three persons of the Trinity,
And the two natures join'd in one, they praise.
The song and dance completed, now they bend
On us their holy eyes; then joyfully
Hailing each other, to their tasks attend.
'Mid the accordant lights then silence brake
That one, which of the lowly man of God,
And of his wondrous story lately spake.
" When from one ear hath been obtain'd the grain,"
It said, " and when it hath been safely stow'd,
Love bids me from the other seed obtain.

Thou deem'st that in the breast from which of yore 37
A rib was torn to form her cheek so fair,
Whose appetite the world hath rued full sore—
In that too, pierced by lance, which for past time
And present too such breaches did repair,
And more than counterbalance every crime,
Was planted whatsoe'er of light is given 43
To our degraded nature, by His might
Who made the twain—the Governor of heav'n :
Thou wonderest that of the spirit seen
In yon fifth star, with saintly lustre dight,
I said, erewhile, 'Its like hath never been.'
Open thine eyes while I reply to thee; 49
And what I say, and thou believest true,
Meeting as in a centre wilt thou see.—
All things created—both of heaven and earth—
Are but the beam of His idea, who
By love paternal calls them into birth :
For that most living Light, proceeding even 55
From its high Author, yet not separate,
And from the trinal Love disparted never,
Collects its rays as in a mirror, thence
Forming the nine subsistences—and yet
Eternally remaining One : and hence,

Descending into lower powers than these,
  By repetition it is brought so low,
  It makes no more than brief contingencies:
I mean things generated, which (their birth
  Whether to seed, or not to seed they owe)
  Heaven, as it whirls, produces upon earth.
Their wax, and He who shapes it, are howe'er
  Of different kind; whence, 'neath the Ideal Seal,
  Various degrees of lustre must appear.
Thus it befals, that trees the same in kind
  Fruit sometimes better, sometimes worse reveal;
  Hence man is form'd with varied powers of mind.
More exquisitely if the wax were moulded,
  And the heavens exerting all their energies,
  Then would the Seal's full lustre be unfolded.
But nature doth a scant supply impart,
  Like Artist, who unto his work applies
  A trembling hand, though practised in his art.
Wherefore if ardent Love should grant a view
  Of Primal Virtue, and an impress give,
  There full perfection must at once ensue.
Thus was to earth at first a power convey'd
  Of perfecting the creatures form'd to live;
  And pregnant thus became the Holy Maid.

And your opinion hence do I maintain,
That human nature never such was found,
Or shall be, as experienc'd in the Twain.
How then without an equal Solomon?
Here to my reasoning if I placed a bound,
Thou would'st return to question me anon.
But that my doctrine thou may'st understand,
Think who he was, and by what impulse taught,
When told to 'ask,' he proffer'd the demand.
From this my speech, thou may'st discern full well
That he as King the gift of wisdom sought,
To the end that he might as a King excel.
The number of the angelic host to know
He cared not; or if from contingency
Necessity in part may ever flow:
Or whether there be self-existent motion,
Or whether in half-circle there may be
Triangle not rectangular:—a notion
Hence, rightly weigh'd, my answer may impart,
That royal prudence I alluded to;
And aim'd at this was my intention's dart.
And if my words thou scrutinize with care,
Thou'lt see that they have only kings in view;
And they are numerous; but good ones, rare.

Draw this distinction, and my speech is quite
  Consistent found with that thou dost believe
  Of our first father, and our Chief Delight.
Let this be lead unto thy feet; that slow
  Thy steps may be (as of one tired) to give
  When not convinced by sight, a yes or no.
For sunk is he 'mid fools in lowest place,
  Who no distinction makes, and in the one
  Decides, as well as in the other case.
For popular opinion is inclined
  To error oft; and then, as well is known,
  Self love comes in, the intellect to blind.
Worse than in vain doth he from shore depart;
  For he returns not what he was before,
  Who fishes for the truth without the art.
Of this indeed full many proofs appear—
  Parmenides, Melissus, many more,
  Who travell'd in the search, not knowing where.
Thus did Sabellius, Arius, many a score
  Of fools, who swords unto the Scriptures were;
  Making that crooked which was straight before.
Then to your judgments give ye not the reins
  Too hastily—like unto him who ere
  The corn be ripe, is fain to count the grains:

For I have seen the thorn through winter snows
  Look sharp and stiff—yet on a future day
  High on its summit bear the tender rose :
And ship I've seen, that through the storms hath past,
  Securely bounding o'er the watery way,
  At the entrance of the harbour wreck'd at last.
Let not Ser Martin or Dame Bertha say—
  Seeing one steal, another sacrifice—
  That they have look'd into the judgment day :
For still the one may fall, the other rise."

PARADISO.

CANTO XIV.

ARGUMENT.

Solomon removes Dante's doubts as to the state of glorified spirits. In the planet Mars, to which they now ascend, are seen the forms of distinguished warriors, studded in the figure of a cross.

PARADISO.

CANTO XIV.

From rim to centre, or reversely, flows
  Water within a bowl, as outwardly
  Or inwardly it be impell'd by blows;
Such on a sudden was the twofold thrill,
  That, passing through my mind, was felt by me,
  Soon as Aquinas' glorious voice was still:—
The effect of likeness 'twixt his words and those
  Of Beatrice; who after him anon
  Address'd me, as my verse ensuing shows.
"Behoves it him, although not yet forsooth
  He utters it, or even thinks thereon,
  To probe unto the root another truth.

Inform him if the light that doth endow
Your substance as with blossoms, will remain,
And with you be eternally, as now:
And if it stays, say how, when ye are dight
With visible integuments again,
The exceeding lustre will not hurt your sight."
As when by gladness prompted and incited,
They who keep up the dance in circling ring
Their voices raise, and movements show delighted;
So, at that beauteous Maid's devoted prayer,
The sacred circles, joy exhibiting,
Danced in a round, and chanting, thrill'd the air.
He who laments that man on earth must die
Ere he may live in heaven, hath little known
The calm refreshment of the shower on high!
The One, composed of Three, who lives for ever,
And reigns for ever, three and two in One,
Restricting all,—Himself restricted never,
Had thrice been chanted by each several spirit
With such divine surpassing melody
As would be full reward for highest merit;
When from the holiest light—i' th' lesser round
I heard a modest voice (such as might be
The voice of Gabriel unto Mary) sound

In answer thus: "Long as the joy shall last
That reigns in Paradise, so long a space
Around us shall our love this raiment cast:—
Bright in proportion to our ardour this,—
Our ardour to the vision; and as grace
Exceedeth merit, such the vision is.
When we regain our flesh, made pure and bright,
Our persons, render'd perfect and complete,
More pleasing will become;—since to the light,
Assign'd unto us now by God's free grace,
A greater share will then be given, that meet
We may become to look upon His face.
Wherefore the vision granted us must needs
Increase—increase the ardour glowing thence—
Increase the radiance that from it proceeds.
But as, while flame emitting, charcoal still
That flame in whiteness overcomes, and hence
Preserves its own identity; so will
The rays, by which we now are compass'd round,
Be vanquish'd by the flesh in brilliancy—
That flesh now yonder cover'd under ground:
Nor will such rays fatigue us, as too bright;
For all the organs of our frame will be
Form'd to sustain whatever gives delight."

The readiness display'd to say, 'Amen,'
By either choir, a heartfelt ardour proved
With their dead bodies to be clothed again:
Not for themselves perhaps, but for their sires,
Their mothers, and the kindred whom they loved,
Before they had become eternal fires.
And lo, on high, and lucid as the one
Now there, encircling it, a light arose,
Like heaven when re-illumin'd by the sun:
And as at the first lighting up of eve
The sky doth new appearances disclose,
That now seem real, now the sight deceive;
So these new substances began, it seem'd,
To show themselves, and compass with a zone
The circles twain, whence light so radiant gleam'd.
O genuine sparkle of the Holy Sprite!
How swift it came; and, oh! how clear it shone,
Dazzling my eyes with the excessive light!
But smiles so lighted Beatrice' glad face,
That I the record of her beauty leave,
With other themes which memory fails to trace.
For loftier flight were then mine eyes restored;
And I was able shortly to perceive
That we had now to loftier regions soar'd:

And this indeed I could not fail to know; 85
Such was the ruddy smile that star display'd,
Which seem'd to witness an unusual glow.
With all the heart, and by that speech which is
The same in all, an holocaust I made
Befitting such new grace and rapturous bliss.
Nor yet had ceased the fervour of my prayer, 91
Ere I perceived my sacrifice to heaven
Had been propitious and accepted there:
For to two beams that then appear'd in sight
Was such a red and ardent lustre given,
"O Sun," I cried, "how brilliant is thy light,"
E'en as illumed with stars of various size, 97
The milky way is 'twixt the poles array'd
In whiteness—raising doubts among the wise;
Thus, studded thickly in Mars' orb profound,
Those beams that venerable sign display'd,
Form'd by diameters within a round.
Describe I cannot what I call to mind; 103
For Christ himself was beaming on that cross:
Wherefore expression meet I cannot find.
But whoso takes his cross, and follows Christ
Excuse will grant, if I am at a loss,—
When that albescence shall irradiate Christ.

From horn to horn, and 'twixt the base and height,
Move lights, whence vivid scintillations flow,
Both when they pass, and at the point unite:
E'en so on earth, oft atoms do we see,
Twisted or straight, these swift, and others slow,
Some long, some short, of all variety,
Sport in the sunbeam, where is streak'd the shade
Which, in defence against the changeful sky,
Man by the exertion of his wit hath made.
And as a lyre, attuned throughout its chords
Unto the harp, a pleasing harmony
To one unknowing of the art affords,
So from the radiant lustre there appearing
Ran through the cross a gathering melody,
Which ravish'd me, although the hymn scarce hearing.
High praises clearly sounded in my ears;
For—"Rise again," I heard, "and victor be,"—
As one not comprehending what he hears.
So much enamour'd was I at the sound,
That never to this time with such sweet ties
Had aught o'erpower'd, and all my senses bound.
Haply my words may overbold appear,
Slighting the joy derived from those fair eyes,
On which I look, and soothe my every care:

But since each living seal of beauty glows
With greater warmth, as we ascend on high;
And since, on these intent, I saw not those,—
Well may I be forgiven, if the while
I accuse myself, I hold to verity;
For hence is banish'd not the holy smile,
But, as it mounts, acquires fresh brilliancy.

PARADISO.

CANTO XV.

ARGUMENT.

In the planet Mars the poet meets with his ancestor Cacciaguida, who describes the simple manners of the Florentines in olden time.

PARADISO.

CANTO XV.

THAT will benevolent, which ever flows
  From heart wherein true charity abounds—
  As selfish love a will malignant shows—
Now still'd the lyre of that melodious band,
  And made the chords to cease their holy sounds—
  Those chords relax'd or braced by Heav'n's right hand.
How shall such spirits to a righteous prayer
  Ever be deaf—who that they might to me
  Audience afford, together silent were?
Well may he ever grieve, that for the love
  Of things which cannot last eternally,
  Loses this fervent charity above!

As oft along the pure and tranquil sky
A sudden fire by night is seen to dart,
Attracting forcibly the heedless eye;—
And seems to be a star that changes place,
Save that no star is lost from out the part
It quits, and that it lasts a moment's space;—
So from the horn extending to the right,
E'en to the foot of that high cross, there shone
A star from out the constellation bright;
Nor left that gem the line whereon it beam'd,
But through the radiant track swift passing on,
Like fire behind pure alabaster seem'd.
Such fond delight Anchises' soul display'd,
(If our most honour'd Muse may be believed)
His son beholding in the Elysian shade.
"O my descendant! O Grace, richly given!
Who, like to thee, hath e'er such share received,
For whom is open'd twice the gate of heaven?"
So spake the light;—then as mine ear I bent,
My looks I turn'd unto my Lady's face,
And drew on either hand astonishment:
For such a smile was glowing in her eyes,
That I appear'd to reach the depth of grace,
And utmost rapture of my Paradise.

Anon—all joyous both in look and speech— 37
The spirit from his bosom's depth outpour'd
Things that my understanding fail'd to reach.
Yet not by choice my reasoning powers he outran,
But of necessity;—so highly soar'd
His thoughts above the aim of mortal man.
And when the bow of his impassion'd thought 43
Had spent its force, so that his speech at last
Down to the level of our minds was brought,
The first thing that my senses understood
Was, "Blessed art Thou, Trinal God, who hast
Displayed such courtesy unto my blood:"
And this he added:—"Know that in the flame, 49
In which I now, my Son, with thee confer,—
That long delicious thirst, which o'er me came
While reading in the mighty book, which time
Affects not, thou hast sated;—thanks to her
Who imp'd thy pinions for the flight sublime.
Thou deemest that thy thoughts pass on to me 55
From Him whence thought proceeds—the Primal One;
As five, or six diverge from unity;
And therefore thou my name dost not demand,
Or why more transport in my look is shown
Than any other of this joyful band:

And what thou deem'st is true; for each one here
Looks on that mirror, upon which thy thought,
Ere yet conceived, is drawn distinct and clear.
But that the sacred love, which constantly
Urges to watchfulness, and a sweet drought
Brings o'er my sense, may more contented be,—
With joyful voice, and with undaunted brow
Declare what wish, and what desire is thine,
Whereto an answer is prepared e'en now."
I turn'd to Beatrice, who heard before
I spake to her, and smiled to me a sign,
Which made the wings of hope increase the more.
"Love, and the power to express it," I commenced,
"When ye beheld the First Equality,
To each of you were equally dispensed;
Since they exist so equal in the Sun
Whence ye derive your heat and brilliancy,
Likeness beside may be imagin'd none.
But among mortals, will and sense are things,
Which, for the cause to you made manifest,
Are far from being trimm'd with equal wings:
Wherefore by me, a mortal, may be shown
For the paternal love thou hast express'd,
My gratitude but in the heart alone.

Prayer unto thee I make with earnest claim,
O living topaz, who this jewel dear
Adornest, to inform me what thy name."
"O thou my branch, know that thy root was I;
And my first joy is to expect thee here:"
Thus was the shade commencing his reply:
And added, "He whose name to thine is bound,
Who for a hundred years and more hath made
His progress through the mountain's topmost round,
Was thy great grandsire, and was son to me:
How would it grace thee, if by filial aid
His tedious sufferings were abridged by thee.
Florence, confined within that ancient wall,
Whence still the chimes at noon and evening sound,
Was sober, modest, and at peace with all.
No chain, no crown had she;—no dames that drew
Rich sandals on their feet, and clasp'd around
The girdle, brighter than themselves to view.
The father at his daughter's birth, with fears
Was troubled not, lest she should ask a dower
Too ample, or too early for her years.
No houses then were void of families;
And no Sardanapalus yet had power
To introduce unseemly novelties.

Not yet had Florence in her thirst for fame
  Eclipsed the structures of imperial Rome—
  Swift as she rose, so swiftly doom'd to shame.
Myself have seen Bellincion Berti pace
  The street in leathern belt;—his lady come
  Forth from her toilet with unpainted face:—
Have seen, contented in their coats of skin,
  The Nerli and the Vecchio; and beheld
  Their wives with joyfulness sit down to spin.
O happy they! each sure to lay the head
  In her own tomb; and no one yet compell'd
  To weep deserted in a lonely bed.
To watch the cradle was the care one chose,
  Her child consoling with the self-same word
  That hush'd their sires and mothers to repose.
Over the distaff, one the flax would comb,
  And tell her family, that wondering heard,
  Stories of Troy, of Fiesole and Rome.
As great a marvel had been deem'd, I trow,
  A Salterello, or Cianghella then,
  As Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.
To such pure life of beauty and repose—
  Such faithful citizens—such happy men
  The Virgin gave me, when my mother's throes

Forced her loud cries to call on Mary's name.
And know, that in your ancient Baptistry,
Christian, and Caceiaguida I became:
Eliseus and Moront my brothers were:
From Val di Pado came my wife to me;
From her derived the surname thou dost bear.
Then follow'd I the Emperor Conrad, who
The honour of a knight on me conferr'd,
In guerdon for my faith and service true:
And in his company I went to fight
Against the faithless, who, to evil stirr'd
By your ill Pastor's fault, usurp your right.
In battle there did that degraded race
From the fallacious world my soul release,
The love of which so many doth debase:
From martyrdom thence came I to this peace."

PARADISO.

CANTO XVI.

ARGUMENT.

CACCIAGUIDA continues his discourse—gives a history of Dante's progenitors, and of the noble families that flourished at Florence in his time.

PARADISO.

CANTO XVI.

O EMPTY name, Nobility of birth! 1
If here below, where frailty is our lot,
Thou promptest man to overrate thy worth,
I ne'er shall be astonish'd; since in heaven,—
There where the appetite offendeth not,—
To boast of my forefathers I was given.
Thou art indeed a robe soon cut away, 7
(Time ever coming round thee with his shears)
If pieces be not added day by day.
With "Ye," a phrase by Rome first countenanced—
Though discontinued in these latter years—
Began the speech I now again advanced;

Whence Beatrice, who stood some distance thence,
Smiling appeared, like her who cough'd, 'tis said,
What time Guinevra wrought her first offence.
I thus my speech began:—"Ye are my Sire;—
Ye bid me speak—Ye bid me raise my head,
And an unwonted confidence inspire.
By streams so numerous is my bosom thrill'd
With gladness—that all joy are its contents,
Not running o'er, although my soul is fill'd.
Tell me then, O loved stock from whence I sprung,
Who were your ancestors, and what the events
Which mark'd the days that pass'd when ye were young?
Say, of the fold protected by St. John,
What was its size; and who the people were,
That chief preeminence within it won."
As coal bursts forth, enliven'd into flame,
When breathes the wind; e'en so that lustre fair
More fervent at my blandishments became;
And brighter as it grew before mine eyes,
So with a voice more soft and sweetly faint,
(But not with that now used—of modern guise)
It answer'd: "From the day when 'Hail' was said,
Unto the day my mother—now a saint—
Me, her loved burden to the light display'd,

Five hundred times and fifty-three this fire
To Leo had return'd; that for its dim
And failing orb fresh light it might acquire.
My ancestors and I dwelt in that place,
First of the last sixth part attain'd by him
Who strives for mastery in your annual race.
Thus much of my Forefathers;—who they were,
And first descended from what race of men,
'Tis fitter to be silent, than declare.
Those capable of bearing arms, betwixt
Mars' statue and the Baptist's church, were then
But a fifth part of those now living;—mixt
Were not the citizens with blood impure
Of Campi and Certaldo, and Figghine,
But from all foreign union dwelt secure.
O how much better had it been for you
Still to have called them neighbours, and confine
On Trespian and Galluzzo, than to view
Them in your walls, and bear the fume that now
Doth from Aguglio's noisome peasant flow;
While he of Signa, bartering, knits his brow!
And if the tribe, who more than any other
Malignant are, had not 'gainst Cæsar so
Inveterate been, but kind as is a mother,

He who now lives in Florence, and drives there 61
His trade, had been turn'd back to Semifonti,
Where erst his Grandsire begged his daily fare,
The Counts had Montemurlo still retain'd;
In Valdigrieve had lived the Buondelmonti;
The Cerchi in Acone had remain'd.
To mixture of the breeds may be imputed 67
The ills which on the city have been pour'd;
As hurt the body various meats ill suited.
A blind bull falls more heavy to the ground
Than a blind lamb; and oft the single sword
Deals than the five a more destructive wound.
If Luni you regard, or Urbisaglia, 73
How they are gone; and how now suffer change
Chiusi in like guise and Sinigaglia—
To hear how noble families decay,
Will not appear a novel thing or strange,
Since states themselves do also pass away.
Like to yourselves, your works are doom'd to die; 79
Although some structure now its end conceals,
Enduring long, while lives are hurried by.
And as the moon, whose orb is never still,
Now covers, now your spreading shores reveals,—
In Florence so doth Fortune work her will:

Wherefore no marvel deem what I relate
Of many a proud and lofty Florentine,
Whose fame of olden time is out of date,
I've seen the Ughi, seen the Greci crown'd
With glory, who now wither in decline;—
The Ormanni, Albericchi too renown'd.
Illustrious for their valour and their birth
The Ardinghi, and Bostichi have I seen,
And Soldanieri, once deem'd men of worth.
Over the gate, where lately deeds so dark
And villainous have perpetrated been,
That they will soon prove fatal to our bark,
The Ravignani used to dwell; whence came
Count Guido, and the mighty ones beside
Who from the great Bellincion take their name.
The arts of rule knew he of Pressa old;
And Galigaio could erewhile with pride
Display the pommel and the hilt of gold.
The column of the Pigli yet was great;
The Giuochi and Sacchetti bore them high;
And the Sifanti still upheld their state.
Flourish'd the ancient stock of the Calfucci;
And to their curule chairs full honorably
Were drawn the Sizii and the Arrigucci.

O how exalted have I seen of old
Those whom their pride hath ruin'd! how once shone
Florence through splendour of the balls of gold!
Such were the sires of those, who if there be
An office vacant, ever and anon
Make themselves fat in your consistory.
The domineering tribe, which fiercely plies
The fugitive, but unto him who shows
Or tooth, or purse, hath lamblike qualities,
Was looking up; but so plebeian still,
That Ubertin Donato's anger rose
At their alliance.—E'en now from the hill
Of Fæsulæ had Caponsac descended
To trade—and Giuda as a citizen,
And Infangato also was commended.
A truth I tell that scarce will be believed:—
The gate into the lesser circle then
From Pera's family its name received.
Each one that bears the insignia of the great
Baron, whose name and worth is testified,
Oft as returns St. Thomas' annual fête,
Knighthood and privilege from him obtain'd;
Though one now lists upon the people's side,
Whose fringe of gold erewhile from him was gain'd.

The Gualterolti still their fame possess'd,
And Importuni;—had no neighbours new
Been added, Borgo still had been at rest.
The family which all your misery wrought
Through the just ire ye so severely rue,
And to an end your glad existence brought,
Was honour'd,—and its friends. How woefully,
O Buondelmonti didst thou fix our doom,
When from thy pledge of marriage thou didst flee!
Many who now are sad, would joyous be,
If God, when to our city thou didst come,
To Ema's waters had abandon'd thee.
But when her days of peace were at an end,
'Twas Florence' doom she should propitiate
The broken bust that doth the bridge defend.
With these and others Florence have I known
In such a tranquil and contented state,
No cause for lamentation could be shown.
With these for her defenders, have I seen
Her people just and glorious, so that ne'er
Stain'd through division had her lily been
With vermeil, or reversed upon the spear.

PARADISO.

CANTO XVII.

ARGUMENT.

Cacciaguida foretels Dante's banishment, and the calamities he is about to suffer from his ungrateful countrymen. He bids him not shrink from declaring the truth revealed in his vision, however bitter it may be.

PARADISO.

CANTO XVII.

As he who came to Clymene, to enquire
If true the tale reported to his shame,
(Phaeton—whose rashness hardens many a sire)
E'en such was I, and such the hue I wore ;
Which Beatrice and that most holy flame
Perceived, who changed his place for me before.
Whereat : " Let thy desire," my Lady said,
" Shine freely forth ; that thus, distinctly shown,
The internal stamp be outwardly display'd.
Not that our knowledge will increase thereby,
But to accustom thee thy thirst to own,
That others may thy longings satisfy."

" Oh my loved stem, exalted to such height,
That plainly as we mortals see but one
Obtuse in a triangle,—so thy sight
Things future contemplates with vision clear,
Viewing that Centre, unto whom are known
Future and past, as though they present were,—
While Virgil guided me, as up we sped,
Around the mountain where souls make them pure,
And down to the dark regions of the dead,
My coming life to me was shadow'd out
In words, that, though I feel well squared to endure
The shafts of fortune, fill'd my mind with doubt:
Wherefore I fain would learn what misery
Awaiteth me from cruel Fortune's hand;
Since gentler comes the arrow we foresee."
Thus spake I to that splendour which addrest
His words to me before with accent bland;
And, as my guide desired, my wish confest.
Nor by responses, such as led astray
The world with smooth deceptions, ere was slain
The Lamb of God, that taketh sins away;
But in bright words and simple ancient style,
The love paternal answer'd me again,
Not dimly seen, though shrouded in his smile.

"Contingency, which doth possess no place
Beyond your globe, nor o'er its bounds extend,
Is wholly pictured in the Eternal face:
(Not that necessity drives things by force,
Unless the eye which sees a ship descend
A rapid stream, be said to urge its course,)
Whence, as soft harmony comes o'er the ear
From some sweet organ, so comes o'er my sight
The time which unto thee approacheth near.
As through a treacherous step-dame's cruel art
Hippolitus from Athens took his flight,
So thou from Florence likewise must depart.
This aim, this object is already sought;
And he who plans it, soon his power shall prove,
E'en there where Christ is daily sold and bought.
On th' injured side shall clamour fix the blame,
As it is wont; but vengeance from above
Shall signal witness of the truth proclaim.
Thou shalt depart, and from each pleasant thing,
Beloved with most affection, be debarr'd:
This arrow first from Exile's bow shall spring.
Thou shalt by trial know what bitter fare
Is bread of others;—and the way how hard
That leadeth up and down another's stair.

But that which shall thy misery complete, 61
Shall be the foul and ruffian company
Which in this valley thou art doom'd to meet:
For most ungrateful, loathsome, impious—all
Shall set themselves against thee: but full nigh
The hour approaches of their destined fall.
In th' issue shall decisive proof be found 67
Of their brutality; so that to thee,
Standing aloof, shall greater fame redound.
Thy first retreat—first refuge from despair,
Shall be the mighty Lombard's courtesy,
Whose arms the Eagle on a ladder bear.
His looks on thee so kindly shall be cast, 73
That asking and conceding shall change place;
And that, wont first to be, 'twixt you be last.
With him shall one be found, who, at his birth,
Was by this ardent star so fraught with grace,
His deeds of valour shall display his worth.
Not yet his greatness by the world is seen; 79
So tender is his age; for scarce nine years
Around him whirling have these circles been;
But ere the Gascon's artifice deceive
Great Henry, he, all sordid hopes and fears
Despising, shall a glorious name achieve.

His deeds magnificent shall still proclaim
His praise so loudly, that his very foes
Shall be compell'd to celebrate his fame.
Look thou to his beneficence; for he
Of fortunes in such manner shall dispose,
Rich shall be poor, and poor exalted be.
Stamp these predictions in thy memory;
But be they not divulged:" then things he told,
Incredible, though witness'd by the eye;
And added: "This my comment doth reveal
The evils whisper'd of:—those snares behold,
Which but a few revolving years conceal.
Yet for your neighbours let no jealousy
Be felt—for longer shall your life be spared
Than to see punish'd their fell perfidy."
Soon as the silence of that holy shade
Show'd the close-woven plot for me prepar'd,
And all the future to my view display'd,—
Doubting, like one who fain would counsel hear
From some tried friend in whom he may repose,
Sound in his judgment, and of soul sincere—
"Sire," I began, "I mark how time for me
Destines a blow, most fatal unto those
Who look for it with most despondency.

Therefore with foresight let me arm my breast,
That if I lose the place I cherish most,
The boldness of my verse lose not the rest.
Down in the world of endless misery,
And on the mountain, from whose beauteous coast
The eyes of Beatrice exalted me ;—
And as through heaven I've pass'd from sphere to sphere,
That have I learnt, which, were I to disclose,
To many would of bitter taste appear.
But if the truth I timidly unfold,
I fear to die in the esteem of those
To whom the present time will soon be old."
The light so dear to me, whence smiles were flowing,
Assumed at first a garb of livelier flame,
Like golden mirror in the sunbeam glowing ;
Then answer'd me : "The conscience that is dyed
Or with its own, or with another's shame,
May not the sharpness of your words abide ;
Nevertheless, each false disguise removed,
Be all the vision fully manifested ;
And let him wince who feels himself reproved :
For if thy words be deem'd a harsh repast,
When tasted first, yet still, when well digested,
A wholesome food shall they afford at last.

Like to the wind shall thy reproof be found,
  Which chiefly doth the loftiest heights assail;
  And hence a greater glory shall redound.
Wherefore no spirits here to thee are shown,
  Or in the mount, or in the dolorous vale,
  Save those whose names and characters are known.
For he who hears thee, will not be inclined
  To give full credence, and to rest secure,
  If the example brought before his mind
Be based on root ignoble or obscure."

PARADISO.

CANTO XVIII.

ARGUMENT.

MANY distinguished warriors and Crusaders are seen in the planet Mars. Dante thence ascends to Jupiter, the sixth heaven, in which the spirits of those who had been eminent upon earth for the administration of Justice are disposed in the form of an Eagle. The Pope contrasted to these, is held up to execration.

PARADISO.

CANTO XVIII.

Now silently that happy soul pursued
His joyous musings—I too, thoughtfully
Temper'd the pleasant with the bitter food;
When she, who led me on my heavenward flight,
Said: "Muse on other things;—and know that I
Am near to Him, who doth each wrong requite."
I turn'd me at my Comforter's loved strain;
But to describe the affection that I view'd
Within her holy eyes I strive in vain;—
Not merely wanting trust in mine own speech,
But, to retrace such feeling, not endued
With mental power, unless Another teach.

This much, however, I can call to mind,
That, gazing upon her in that blest place,
All other wishes wholly were resign'd;
Till the Eternal Pleasure, that beam'd bright
On Beatrice, reflected from her face,
Thrill'd me again with exquisite delight.
Then with a smile that all my soul subdued,
"Turn thee, and list," she said; "for Paradise
May elsewhere than within these eyes be view'd."
And as sometimes in this our mortal state
We see affection pictur'd in the eyes,
Of power the soul entire to captivate—
So, in the effulgence of that holy flame
To which I turn'd, an ardent wish I saw
With me a further intercourse to claim.
"In this fifth step," commenced he, "of the tree,
Which vital strength doth from the Summit draw,
And beareth fruit and leaves eternally,—
Are spirits blest, who, ere to heaven they came,
Obtain'd such high distinction in their day,
Each were a theme to exalt a poet's fame.
Wherefore observe the cross in either horn;
And he whom I shall name will there display
The form of lightning 'thwart heav'n's concave borne."

Joshua he named; whereat I saw a light
Swift drawn along the cross; nor did the sound
Reach mine ear swifter than the flame my sight.
Another bright effulgence I beheld,
At name of Maccabee, whirl round and round;
Gladness the lash which that bright top impell'd.
Then in like manner was my eyesight bent
Orlando to behold, and Charlemagne,
As on his bird the falconer looks intent.
There William I beheld, and Rinoard;
And the Duke Godfrey was in semblance plain
Seen on that cross, and Robert hight Guiscard.
The soul who spake to me, now—(mixt among
The other lights and singers manifold)
Show'd how in heaven he knew to pour the song:
I turn'd me then unto the dexter side,
In Beatrice my duty to behold,
Or by her words or action signified;
And saw the rays beam from her so serene,
So joyous—she surpast herself in beauty—
Beauty transcending all that there was seen.
And as from consciousness of joy and peace,
The man who strives in active course of duty
Feels day by day his energy increase;

So I perceived the circle of my flight, 61
Together with the heaven, become enlarged,
Seeing that Miracle increase in light.
And rapid as the change in Maiden's face,
What time the crimson hue wherewith 'twas charged,
To native paleness doth again give place;
Such change in Beatrice the silvery sheen 67
Of that attemper'd planet gave to sight;—
The sixth in which I so received had been.
And in that gladsome torch of Jove I saw
The sparks of love, which there were beaming bright,
Letters like those we use, distinctly draw.
And as birds rising from a stream, whence they 73
Their pastures view, as though their joy confessing,
Now form a round, and now a long array;
So, singing as they fly, did joy impel
These creatures blest, themselves in figures dressing,
Now like the letter D—now I—now L.
They move accordant to the holy strain, 79
Till one of these same letters they have wrought;
Then for awhile in silence they remain.
O heavenly Muse, that dost to glory give
Those favour'd sons, who, by thy lessons taught,
Make states and cities in thy numbers live—

Impart thy light, that I may now rehearse
The forms in which these gems mine eyesight smote;
And may thy power appear in this brief verse!
Vowels and consonants then met mine eye,
Thirty and five; nor did I fail to note
The order in the which they seem'd to lie.
"Diligite justitiam," first pass'd
Before me, in effulgent words portray'd;
"Qui judicatis terram," were the last.
Now in the M of terram were they so
Arranged, that like to silver when inlaid
With gold, did Jupiter's appearance show.
And towards the summit of the M, I saw
Descending other lights, and resting there,
Singing His praise who them to Himself doth draw.
Then as we see from shaken firebrands rise
Innumerable sparkles in the air,
Whence omens are inferr'd by the unwise;
So, as it seem'd, some thousand lights arose,
These mounting more, these less, e'en at the beck
Of that bright Sun from whom their glory flows.
And when each one, in its own station placed,
Had settled, I an Eagle's head and neck
Saw in that silvery flame distinctly traced.

(No guiding hand the Painter here possesses—
  Himself the guide: each orb His power proclaims,
  And His informing mind throughout confesses.)
The other souls, that late by gladness stirr'd,
  Cast their white crowns of lilies 'mid the M's,
  With easy flight pursued the imperial bird.
O blessed star! how many a proof is given,
  By thy bright jewels, that our justice here
  Is the effect of thy bespangled heaven!
Wherefore to Him, in whom ye move, I pray,
  That He be pleased to mark the region, where
  Rises the smoke that dims your silver ray:
So that His anger may be shown once more
  'Gainst them who buy and sell within the fane
  Built up by miracles and martyr's gore.
Ye hosts of heaven, whose armies I survey,
  Pray for all those who yet on earth remain,
  After an ill example gone astray!
In warfare men were wont with sword to ply;
  But now 'tis waged by holding back that bread
  The pitying Father doth to none deny.
And thou, who writest but to blot again,
  Bethink thee—Paul and Peter are not dead,
  Though for the vineyard, that thou spoilest, slain.

Well mayest thou exclaim: "For him who erst 133
Chose in deserted wilds to live alone,
(His head a dancer's prize) so much I thirst,
The Fisherman and Paul are both unknown."

PARADISO.

CANTO XIX.

ARGUMENT.

The Eagle replies to Dante's inquiry whether any who are not Christians can be saved.



PARADISO.

CANTO XIX.

BEFORE my sight now shone with wings outspread
The beauteous Image, whose appearance gay
O'er the collected souls its gladness shed;
Like to a little ruby each in guise—
On which the sun shot so intense a ray,
Its lustre was refracted on mine eyes.
And that which now I am assign'd to write,
Voice never told before, or pen express'd,
Nor e'er was caught by fancy's highest flight:
For I beheld and heard the eagle speak;
Though in the singular he us address'd,
The plural was intended by the beak.

"For being just and pious," he began,
"To this high state of glory am I raised,
Surpassing all that is conceived by man:
And such remembrance have I left on earth,
That even by the impious it is praised,
Though slow they be to emulate my worth."
As several brands emit a single heat,
From many loving spirits even so
Did numerous voices in accordance meet.
I then began: "O ye delicious flowers
Of the eternal joy, that ever blow,
Mingling in one your odoriferous showers;
Speak, and the cravings of my soul relieve,
So long a time by hunger tried severely;
Since earthly food may no contentment give.
Well know I, if in any realm of heaven
Supernal Justice is reflected clearly,
In your's no dim or sparing view is given.
Ye know how ardent is my wish to hear;
Ye know the doubt that to my bosom clings,
And has so long been found an inmate there."
Lo, as a falcon, from the hood released,
Uplifts his head, and joyous flaps his wings,
His beauty and his eagerness increased;—

So saw I plume itself that ensign bright,
  Composed of praises to the Spirit divine,
  And songs, in heaven expressive of delight:
Then utter: "He his compasses who placed
  At the world's limit, and within the line
  Drew beauties, dimly or distinctly traced—
Could not so forcibly inscribe His might
  Throughout the universe, but that His Word
  Must still be left in distance infinite:
And hence 'tis evident that he in heaven
  Created loftiest, his fate incurred,
  Because he would not wait till light was given.
And hence are all inferior creatures shown
  Scant vessels of that Goodness unconfined,
  Which nought can measure save itself alone.
Therefore our intellect—a feeble beam,
  Struck from the light of the Eternal Mind,—
  With which all things throughout creation teem,—
By nature must be quite incapable,
  Save in a low and most remote degree,
  Of viewing its exalted principle:
And hence the heavenly Justice can no more
  By mortal ken be fathom'd, than the sea:—
  For though the eye of one upon the shore

May pierce its shallow tide—the depths beyond 61
Baffle his ken, yet there is also laid
A bottom, viewless through the deep profound.
Light is there none, save from the purely bright,
Which never is disturb'd; all else is shade,
Or poison of the flesh, or blackest night.
Now on your view the dark retreat doth break, 67
Wherein the living Justice was conceal'd,
Of which such frequent mention thou didst make;
Saying: 'By Indus' stream a man is bred,
Where no one hath a dying Christ reveal'd,
Or written of him, or his sufferings read;
His wishes all, as far as human sense 73
Is able to discover, blameless are,
And all his actions too, without offence;
Yet unbaptized, and heathen, he must die:
Where is this Justice that condemns him?—where,
Though he believe not, doth his sinning lie?'
Now who art thou who would'st assume the place 79
Of Judge; and, with such finite powers, would'st scan
His counsels who alone pervadeth space?
To him indeed who thus would subtilize,—
Were Scripture not of greater weight than man—
Matter for doubt in plenty might arise.

O earthly animals! O gross of mind!
The primal Will, innately good, hath never
Swerved, or from its own perfect Self declined.
Justice in likeness unto It consists:
No good that is created warps it ever;
And by its beam alone that good exists."
As the stork lifts herself the nest above,
When she hath fed her little ones; and they
Regard their mother with a look of love;
E'en so that ever blessed Bird appear'd—
Raising its wings, excited by the sway
Of numerous thoughts;—and so my eyes I rear'd.
Turning around it sang: "Obscure to thee
As have been found these mystic notes of mine;
So dark to man is Heav'n's all wise decree."
When silence o'er those burning splendours came
Of the Holy Spirit, still within the sign
Which awed the world beneath the Roman name,
It recommenced—"In this high realm abide
None who of old did not in Christ believe,
Before or after he was crucified.
But oh! what multitudes—'Lord, Lord,' exclaim,
Who in the judgment shall have cause to grieve
Far more than those who never knew His name.

Shame on such Christians shall the Ethiop cry,
When the two colleges shall part—the one
To endless wealth, the one to poverty.
What shall the Persians to your kings exclaim,
When open they shall see the volume thrown,
And view the record of their blasted fame?
There, 'mid the other deeds by Albert wrought,
Shall that be seen, whereby with speedy wing
Affliction on Bohemia shall be brought.
There shall be seen the woe that he shall pour
Along the Seine, the coin depreciating,—
He who shall meet destruction from a boar.
There shall be seen the domineering pride
Which Scot and English equally befools,
Breaking the bounds in which they should abide:
There seen the effeminacy, that over Spain
And likewise over the Bohemian rules,
Who virtue ne'er hath gain'd, or wished to gain:
There seen the cripple of Jerusalem,
Whose good deeds by a unit may be told,
The opposite denoted by an m:
There seen his lust of gold and cowardice,
Who guards the isle of fire, in which of old
Anchises closed his mortal destinies.

How slight his worth the better to make known,
His letters must be an abbreviation,
Whereby in compass small, may much be shown.
There shall the evil actions be display'd
Of the Uncle and the Brother, who such nation,
And two such crowns, have in dishonour laid.
And he of Portugal, and Norway too,
And he of Rascia shall be there confest,
Who well the sight of Venice coin may rue.
Blest Hungary, if thou could'st set thee free
From future injuries! Navarre too blest,
Couldst thou but arm the mount that circles thee!
Presaging this, e'en now the cries we hear,
Whence Famagosta with Nicosia rings
Against the raging beast, who will not bear
To separate himself from other kings."

PARADISO.

CANTO XX.

ARGUMENT.

THE Eagle speaks. Seated in the pupil of its eye is seen David, surrounded by Hezekiah, Constantine, William II of Sicily, Trajan, Ripheus. By these instances Dante shows that the Heathen are not precluded from salvation.

PARADISO.

CANTO XX.

When he, who with his universal ray
The world illumines, quits our hemisphere;
And, from each quarter, daylight wears away;
The heaven, erst kindled by his beam alone,
Sudden its lost effulgence doth repair
By many lights, illumined but by one.
Such was the scene presented; when the beak
Of that blest sign imperial, and its throngs
Of various leaders, now had ceased to speak:
For all those living souls, in light array'd,
And more transcendent now, began their songs,—
Songs that from memory too swiftly fade.

Sweet Love, who deck'st thyself with smiles! how glow'd
Thy rays with fervour in those sparks divine, [13
Which unto holy thoughts their rapture owed!
Soon as the luminous and precious stones
With which engemm'd I saw the sixth light shine,
Had put to silence the angelic tones,
Methought I heard a stream, whose limpid course 19
From rock to rock its murmuring waters roll'd,
Showing the abundant richness of its source.
And as along the cithern's neck, the sound
Is tuned and temper'd; or the wind, controll'd
Through pastoral reed, breathes grateful notes around;
So, no delay allow'd to interpose, 25
Up through the neck, as though it hollow were,
A murmur from the imperial Bird arose:
Then utterance follow'd; and the words that fell
From forth the beak, articulate and clear,
My heart foreboded, and retains full well.
"Behold that part of me which dares the day 31
In mortal eagles; and take care to give
All the attention that thy mind can pay:
For, of the flames by which my form is dight,
Those whence mine eye its sparkles doth derive
Surpass the others in excess of light.

This in the midst, like pupil of the eye,
Was he who bore the ark from town to town,
And sang in notes of heaven-taught psalmody.
Now he perceives how valued are his strains
(As far as he himself deserves renown)
By the surpassing guerdon he obtains.
Of the five who round my eyelid form a zone,
The one, whom nearest to my beak you see,
Consoled the widow for her murder'd son.
Now knows he by experience of this
Sweet life, and of the opposite, how he
Who walks not after Christ falls short of bliss.
He who comes next in the circumference,
And forms the upper arch, his death delay'd
By tears unfeign'd, and real penitence;
Now knows he that God's Justice changeth not,
Though, through the prayer of piety, be stay'd
From day to day the fast approaching lot.
The next you view (his good intent defeated)
A Greek became with me and with the laws,
That in his room the Pastor might be seated.
Now knoweth he that the ill consequence
Of his good deed no harm upon him draws,
Although the world hath been confounded thence.

He, lower in the arch, was William, who 61
With many a tear is wish'd for by that land
Which doth the living Charles and Frederick rue.
Now knows he how in heaven a righteous king
Is loved; and this the more to understand,
The brightness of his face a proof may bring.
Who, in the erring world of man below, 67
Would think the Trojan Ripheus e'er could be
The fifth effulgence of this holy bow?
Full well discerns he now the heavenly grace,
(Which mortals, blindly groping, cannot see,)
Although unable all its depth to trace."
As when the lark high soaring doth rejoice, 73
Singing at first,—then all at once is still,
Contented with the sweetness of its voice:
Such was the semblance of that Image blest,
Stamp'd by the Eternal Pleasure, at whose will
Are all things with their proper form imprest.
And though with reference to my doubt, was I 79
As glass unto the colour o'er it laid,
I could not wait with patience silently;
But, "What are these?" with eagerness enquired;
Whereat the imperial Bird its joy betray'd,
In garb of greater brilliancy attired.

Then nearer, and with eye that glow'd intense, 85
To me the blessed eagle made reply,
Lest admiration keep me in suspense:
"These things, I plainly see, thou hast believed,
Because I told thee; but conceal'd they lie—
Not understood by mortals, though received.
Thou art like one who apprehendeth well 91
A thing by name, but cannot see the why,
Unless another doth the reason tell.
Heaven's kingdom suffers violence—by love
And lively hope assail'd,—whose ardency
Hath power the will of the Most High to move:
Not by the mode that man his fellow sways, 97
But because God is willing to be sway'd,
And rules but by the kindness he displays.
The first and fifth light of the arch may well
Wonder excite, that with such gems array'd
Should be the region where the Angels dwell.
They left their bodies, not as you presume, 103
Gentiles, but Christians, firm in faith—the one
Before, the other after Jesus' doom.
For know, the one his flesh and bone regain'd
From hell, where saving penitence is none,
And this reward of lively hope obtain'd,—

Of lively hope,—which wholly placed its strength
In prayers to God that life he would restore,—
Endued with power to move His will at length.
The glorious soul whose name I have disclosed
(Returning for short space to life once more)
In the All-wise his confidence reposed;
And kindled into such a flame of love
Through faith, that at the second death was he
Deem'd worthy of this joyous seat above.
The other, through the assistance of that Grace
Which flows from source of such profundity,
That mortal eye could ne'er that fountain trace;
To justice all his love on earth bestow'd;
Whence God, of his own bounteous grace, a sight
Of our redemption by the Saviour show'd.
Believing in its truth, thenceforth he scorn'd
To persevere in filth of Pagan rite;
And of their sin the crooked nations warn'd.
A thousand years ere baptism was ordain'd,
For him were sponsors those three ladies, who
The car's right wheel for their high station gain'd.
Predestination! oh how distant lies
Thy root from those, who do not wholly view
The Primal Cause unfolded to their eyes!

And you, ye mortals, be your judgments slow ;
  For we, by whom the Godhead is descried,
  Not yet the number of the elect do know.
And sweet it is in ignorance to be,
  Because our bliss is doubly sanctified,
  In that the will of God, and our's, agree."
So by the image of that Bird divine—
  (Making my feeble vision more intense)
  Was given to me a pleasant medicine.
And e'en as a good harper twangs the chord
  In concert with the singer's voice, that thence
  The greater pleasure may the song afford ;—
So, while it spoke, did those two sparks of love
  (For I recal their perfect sympathies)
  Their flames together with its accents move,
Like the accordant glancing of the eyes.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXI.

ARGUMENT.

In the planet Saturn, or seventh heaven, are found contemplative spirits. A vision of Jacob's ladder. St. Pietro Damiano reproves the luxury of modern prelates. The voice of vengeance against them is heard to sound.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXI.

Now on the face of my loved Lady were
  My eyes and mind again intently stay'd;
  Nor other object occupied my care:
Her look bore not the accustom'd smile divine;
  "And should I but indulge a smile," she said,
  "The fate of Semele would soon be thine:
For since my beauty—higher as we rise
  Towards the eternal palace—glows more bright
  At every step, as witness'd by thine eyes,—
Were not a veil before its radiance cast,
  Your mortal vision, dazzled at the sight,
  Would shrink as leaves before the lightning blast.

Now to the seventh light have we ascended,
  Which underneath the Lion's burning breast
  Is beaming downward, with his ardour blended.
Then let thine eyes afford a mirror true
  Unto thy mind, that there may be exprest
  What this resplendent glass shall give to view."
He who had relish'd the repast, whereon
  Mine eyes were feasting in her holy face,
  What time was changed their object, could alone
Know how delightful was to me the obeying
  Her voice, which led me by celestial grace—
  The one against the other pleasure weighing.
Within the crystal that partakes the name
  Of its bright leader, (circling round the sky)
  Beneath whose sway all vice as dead became,
I saw a stair, on which the sunbeams play'd,
  Of golden hue, towards heaven upraised so high,
  Mine eyes in vain to reach its top essay'd;
I saw too, coming down that brilliant stair,
  Such multitude of splendours, that methought
  Heaven's every light must be concentred there.
And as with one accord, at break of day,
  The rooks bestir themselves, by nature taught
  To chase the dew-drops from their wings away;

Some flying off, to re-appear no more—
Others repairing to their nests again,—
Some whirling once—then settling as before;—
Such to my fancy, and in substance like
To these, was that irradiate sparkling train,
As in their course the heavenly stair they strike:
And one, which unto us appeared the nearest,
Became so bright, I thought within my breast,
Full well I see the love to me thou bearest!
But she was silent, at whose signal I
Was wont to proffer or withhold request;
Wherefore I check'd my speech, unwillingly.
Whence she, who in the all-seeing eyes of Heav'n
Was witness to my silence, said to me:
"Let reins unto thy strong desire be given."
And I: "No merit I myself possess
Makes me deserving of reply from thee;
But for her sake who bids me thee address,
O spirit blest, that dost thyself conceal
Within thine own delight; to me disclose
The reason of thy coming; and reveal
Why the sweet symphony of Paradise
In this high sphere is silent, when in those
Below, devoutly sound its melodies?"

"Mortal thy hearing as thy sight," she said; 61
"And the same reason now forbids the song,
That late in Beatrice the smile forbade.
I have descended this most holy stair,
Solely thy festive joyance to prolong,
Both by my voice, and by the garb I wear.
Not through more love more speedily I came, 67
Since love on high as great or greater glows,
As manifested by the beaming flame;
But the exalted Charity, whose will,
Prompt servants, we obey, on each bestows
The office he is suited to fulfil."
"O sacred lamp," I said, "full well I see 73
Eternal Providence is here obey'd
Through love alone, that works spontaneously:
But what is difficult to understand,
Is, why selection hath of thee been made
For this behest, from all thy numerous band."
Scarce utterance to these accents had I given, 79
Ere on its centre turn'd the light, like mill
That whirls around, with rapid motion driven.
The love within it utter'd then this sound:
"A heavenly lustre doth my spirit fill,
Piercing the radiant vest that wraps me round;

Whose ardent power, united with my sight,
So raises me above myself, I view
The essential Source of this celestial light:
Hence is derived the joy wherewith I glow;
Since in proportion as my sight is true,
The more in likeness to the flame I grow.
But thy demand—not he who in the abode
Of heaven is brightest—not the seraphim
Who keeps his eye most keenly fix'd on God,
May answer;—since so deeply sunk it lies
The inscrutable decrees of God within,
No creature thither may extend his eyes.
When thou returnest to the abode of man,
This truth bear with thee;—that hereafter none
Presume such mighty mysteries to scan.
The mind, enlighten'd here, on earth is dim;
How can it then discern those things, which one
In heaven acknowledges too high for him?"
These words such narrow bounds to me assign'd,
I persevered not; but, with reverent fear,
To ask his name my question I confined.
"'Twixt the two shores of Italy are found
A line of hills so steep, thy country near,
That underneath thee do the thunders sound:

They form a ridge, by name of Catria known;
Beneath whose shelter, dedicate to prayer,
Standeth a holy hermitage alone."
Thus the third time the spirit spake;—then said,
His speech continuing:—"My thoughts were there
On God so wholly and intently stay'd,
That though on olives it was mine to live,
I bore with ease the extremes of heat and cold,
Feeding my mind with thoughts contemplative.
That cloister to these heavens was wont to yield
Rich harvest once; but empty now the fold;
A truth ere many years to be reveal'd.
There Pietro Damiano was I hight;
(Pietro the Sinner dwelling by the shore
Of Adria in our Lady's house:)—and slight
Remnant of life was mine, when I was doom'd
To wear that hat, degraded more and more,
As by successive heads it is assumed.
Lean and unshod St. Peter came of yore;
And he the vessel of the Holy Ghost,—
Gathering their food content from door to door.
Now are the modern Pastors so refined,
Attendants they require, a numerous host,
To ease their sides, and prop them from behind.

Their palfreys they o'erlay with mantles wide,
So that one skin doth o'er two beasts extend:
How long will Heaven with patience view such pride!"
This spoken, I beheld full many a flame
From step to step in circling form descend;
While, every turn, more beauteous they became.
About the flame which spake to me they drew,
Uttering a cry, that in mine ears so sounded,
Nought upon earth might give a semblance true:
I understood not, by the crash confounded.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXII.

ARGUMENT.

Among other contemplative spirits in the planet Saturn, Dante meets St. Benedict, who inveighs against the corruption of the monks. Mounting to the constellation of the Gemini, or eighth heaven, he looks down upon the earth.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXII.

OPPRESS'D with stupor turn'd I to my guide,
E'en as an infant, ever wont to run
Thither where most 'tis able to confide:
And she, like to a mother, who gives aid
In haste unto her pale and panting son
By words of well known consolation, said:
"Dost thou not know thou art in heaven?—not know
That Holiness pervades each part of heaven,
And that our bliss to righteous zeal we owe?
Now judge what change in thee the song hath wrought,
What change too, had one smile by me been given,
Since with such power the shout alone is fraught.

And had the entreaty utter'd in that cry
  Been understood, to thee had then been known
  The vengeance thou shalt witness ere thou die.
Not hastily the sword is brandish'd here,
  Or tardily, save in his view alone
  Who waits it or in longing or in fear.
But now to other parts thine eyesight turn;
  And if, as I direct, thy look thou raise,
  Full many illustrious souls shalt thou discern."
Mine eyes I then uplifted, as she taught;
  And saw a hundred little spheres, whose blaze
  Of beauty grew, by mutual radiance caught.
I stood like one who strong desire restrains,
  And overwhelm'd by his excessive fear,
  Reft of the power of questioning, remains:
When lo, the largest and the loveliest
  Of all these pearls, advancing, now drew near,
  To satisfy the wish I had supprest.
Then from within I heard: "Hadst thou but seen
  As I have, how the flame of charity
  Among us burns, thy wish express'd had been:
But lest thou should'st delay thy lofty aim
  By this reluctance, I will now reply
  E'en to the cherished thought thou dost not name.

This mountain, on whose side Cassino lies,
A nation formerly inhabited,
Given up to vice and foul idolatries.
And I am he who led them first to praise
His glorious name, who o'er the world hath spread
That truth which doth our fallen nature raise.
His grace illumed me with such ardent ray,
That the surrounding people I reclaim'd
From the vile rites which led the world astray.
Those other fires, now all contemplative,
Erewhile were men, and with that warmth inflamed,
Whence holy flowers and fruits their growth derive.
Maccarius here, here Romoald, and here
My brethren, who within the cloister wall
Fix'd firm their feet, and kept their heart sincere."
And I to him: "The zeal that unto me
Thy speech betokeneth, and the looks ye all,
O fervent spirits, cast benignantly,
My confidence enlarge, e'en as the rose,
Expanding 'neath the sun's enlivening ray,
Doth every leaf in all its breadth disclose.
Wherefore, if I may share such ample grace,
Do thou, O Father, listen, when I pray
That e'en to me thou would'st unveil thy face."

"In the last sphere, my brother," he replied,
"To thy request fulfilment shall be given,
Where all desires are amply satisfied.
There every wish is perfect and mature;
And that too is the only part of heaven
Where all things free from change for aye endure.
There bounds are none; no pole there guidance lends;
And hence is lost to stretch of human ken
The stair that thither from our earth ascends;
Whose summit did the Patriarch Jacob see
To that exalted realm extending, when
With Angels laden it appear'd to be.
But no one now, to ascend that ladder, leaves
The earth behind him; and my rules remain,
Wasting the page that useless ink receives.
The walls, devoted erst to doing good,
Are dens become; the cloaks, that did contain
Good nutriment, now swell with evil food.
Not usury so thwarts the Almighty pleasure
As that pernicious fruit which doth dispose
The heart of monks to riot above measure:
For all the Church possesseth appertains
To those on God depending, not to those
Who share through kindred in unrighteous gains.

So soft is flesh of mortals, that on earth
A good beginning doth no longer last
Than while an oak may bring its fruit to birth.
Peter began his convent without gold
Or silver,—I built mine by prayer and fast;—
Humility for Francis won a fold.
If thou reflect how each begins, then view
To what an end doth such beginning lead,
Thou'lt see the white assume a darker hue.
Jordan driven backward,—and the sea, that fled
At God's command, were miracles indeed
Greater than those here needful."—This he said;—
Then hasted to his comrades; and when they
As in a cluster congregated were,
All like a whirlwind took their heavenward way.
Me likewise in their train by one sole sign
That lovely Lady forced to mount the stair;
So strongly wrought her spirit upon mine.
Nor on our earth with such velocity
Was aught e'er carried downward or aloft,
Whose rapid flight with mine compared might be.
O reader, by my hope to see that blest
And holy realm again, (a hope that oft
Makes me bewail my faults, and strike my breast)

Thou could'st not thrust thy finger in a flame
And draw it out in such short space, as I
Beheld the Twins, and mounted to the same.
O glorious constellation! Light divine!
Pregnant with inspiration from on high,
To which I owe whate'er of skill be mine:—
With you his rise, his setting had with you
He who of all things living is the soul,
When first the air of Tuscany I drew:
And when through grace vouchsafed, to me was given
To enter the high wheel in which ye roll,
Your's was the realm allotted me in heaven.
For you devoutly now my spirit sighs,
In fervent hope to be endued with might
Befitting such an arduous enterprize.
And Beatrice began: "Thou art so near
Thy final resting place, that now thy sight
Must surely have become acute and clear:
Therefore, ere loftier regions thou explore,
Look down; and taking of the world a view,
See what a vast extent thou hast pass'd o'er.
So shall thy heart with all the joy it may
Present itself to that triumphal crew,
Which through this ether speeds its blissful way."

Back through the seven fold spheres I cast mine eyes;
And of this globe as I a survey took,
I smiled, its mean aspect to recognize.
Him who least prizes it I most esteem;
And whoso to the other world his look
Directs, him truly noble one may deem.
The daughter of Latona saw I there
Without the shade that makes her surface dim,
And led me to suppose her dense and rare.
Here I endured the aspect of thy son,
Hyperion; and saw how, near to him,
And round him, Maia and Dione run.
I saw how, 'twixt his son and father, Jove
Attemper'd shone; and, on their course intent,
Saw how they change their station as they move.
The size was visible of all the seven,
And their velocity was evident,
And what their distance each from each in heaven.
This little globe, which fills us with such pride,
I, circling with the eternal twins, discern'd
From mountain top to shore extended wide:—
Then on the beauteous eyes mine eyes I turn'd.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXIII.

ARGUMENT.

DANTE beholds the triumph of Christ, attended by an infinite number of Saints.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXIII.

E'EN as the bird that watching in the nest
Of her sweet brood, the sheltering boughs among,
While all things are enwrapt in night's dark vest;—
Now anxious to behold the looks she loves,
And to find food for her impatient young
(Whence labour grateful to a mother proves)
Forestals the time, high perch'd upon the spray,
And with impassion'd zeal the sun expecting,
Gazes attentive till the break of day;
Thus stood my lady with a watchful gaze
Upright—her eyes unto that part directing
Where Phœbus his impetuous steeds delays.

So that I, seeing her thus fondly bent,
Was like to one, who with desiring eye
Hopes somewhat new, and rests in hope content.
But little was the interval that came
Betwixt the expectance and reality,
Since heaven anon was wrapt in brighter flame:
And Beatrice exclaim'd: "Behold the host
Of Christ triumphant; and the plenteous store
Of fruit which these celestial circles boast."
All glowing unto me appear'd her face;
And eyes so full of joyousness she wore,
Words would in vain their heavenly lustre trace.
As when the moon is at the full and clear,
Diana smiles the eternal Nymphs among,
Who paint the heavens through every part—so here
I saw high o'er ten thousand Lamps divine
A single Sun, that lit up all the throng,
As doth our sun the stars that round him shine:
And with such clearness through the living light
Shone the translucent Substance on mine eyes,
That they refused to endure the dazzling sight.
O Beatrice, most sweet and precious guide!
Then she: "The blaze that quells thy faculties
Glows with a virtue nought hath power to hide.

Here is the Wisdom, here the Power, that bade 37
A way be open'd 'twixt the earth and heaven,—
So long to many an anxious prayer delay'd."
As bursts on high, to revel in the skies,
Fire from thick cloud, by force ethereal riven;
And falls to earth, though nature prompt to rise;
So 'mid the dainties of that heavenly board 43
My mind expanding wander'd far astray,
And what then happen'd cannot now record.
"Open thine eyes, and view me:—thou hast seen
Objects so brilliant that thine eyesight may
Sustain my smile, which else too bright had been."
I was like one who doth in part retain 49
The impression of a vision pass'd away,
And tries to bring it to his mind in vain,
When I this proffer heard, so graciously
Bestow'd, that never to my dying day
The sound shall vanish from my memory.
If now those tongues were all to lend their aid, 55
That Polyhymnia and the sister Nine
Rich through the sweetness of their milk have made,
Not to the thousandth part would be portray'd
The sacred beauty of that smile divine
Which with delight the holy look array'd:

And therefore in my sketch of Paradise
The hallow'd song to leap must be constrain'd,
As when a chasm before our pathway lies.
But whoso thinks how weighty is the theme,
And that by mortal shoulder 'tis sustain'd,
No blame will cast, although to bend it seem.
To stem this sea may no light bark essay,
Or careless pilot, who his toil would spare;
Since deep the daring prow must cleave its way.
"Why with my face art thou enamour'd so,
That thou beholdest not the garden, where
Flowers nurtur'd under Christ's effulgence blow?
Here is the Rose in which the Word Divine
Made itself flesh:—the Lilies too, that taught
By their sweet smell the goodly path, here shine."
Thus Beatrice;—and I, all prompt to do
Her bidding, my enfeebled eyesight brought
To encounter that excessive glare anew.
As by the sun's pure beam, direct convey'd
Through broken cloud, a mead of flowers I've seen
Lit up,—myself the while enwrapt in shade;
So I beheld full many an orb of light
Shone down upon by rays of brilliant sheen,—
The source of splendour not reveal'd to sight.

O power benign, whose stamp is on these rays!
Thou didst exalt thyself the skies above,
That my weak vision might endure the blaze.
The name of that fair flower, which morn and night
My lips invoke, within my soul now strove,
Bidding me watch intent the greater light:
And as I mark'd the grandeur and the glow
Of that pure living star, which all excell'd
On high, as erst it vanquish'd all below;
A little torch within this heaven came down,
And round about that starry splendour held
A circling course, in fashion like a crown.
The sweetest and most touching notes that earth
May boast, would seem discordant, like the sound
To which, when rent, the thunder cloud gives birth,
Compared in tone with that angelic lyre,
Which, thrilling all the empyrean, crown'd
The firmament in sapphire's rich attire.
"I am Angelic Love, and breathe the fire
Of holy joy, from that pure virgin breast
Derived, which wrapt erewhile the world's Desire;
And still, O Queen of heaven, this task be mine,
As long as in the highest sphere a guest,
Following thy Son, thou mak'st it more divine."

Such was that circling strain's enraptured close,
When from the other lights abiding there
The name of Mary speedily arose.
The mantle that its royal covering throws
Around the world, and boasts the greatest share
Of God's own Spirit, and most warmly glows,
So high above us rear'd its inmost cope,
That from the lower sphere where I abode
It was not yet within my vision's scope:
Wherefore I vainly strove to view the course
Of that encircled flame, as high it rode
The heavens, ascending to its primal source.
And as an infant at its mother's breast
Extends his arms when fully satisfied;—
(By outward act the inward joy exprest;)—
So these aspiring orbs of purest flame
Mounted, in guise that to my soul implied
How deep the love they bore to Mary's name.
And pausing there, they hover'd in my sight,
Chanting 'Regina Cœli' in such measure,
E'en yet their sweetness thrills me with delight.
Oh, how abundant is the harvest stow'd
In those receptacles of heavenly treasure,
Which upon earth a seed so goodly sow'd!

Here they rejoice, and taste the wealth of old 133
Acquired with many a tear in Babylon,
During their exile, where they left the gold:
Here shares the honour of the victory
Gain'd by the aid of God, and Mary's Son,
Among the old and recent warriors, He,
Who holds the keys, and this high glory won.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXIV.

ARGUMENT.

St. Peter examines Dante concerning Faith.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXIV.

" O YE, elected to the banquet high
Of the ever blessed Lamb, whence ye obtain
Food that may every craving satisfy;
Since of the crumbs that from your table fall
This man through mercy doth a foretaste gain,
Ere death at the appointed season call,
Regard his inexhaustible desires,
And with a little dew assuage them;—ye
Drink ever of the fount to which he aspires."
Thus Beatrice—anon these spirits came
Around us in a circle, joyfully,
Darting, like comets, each a living flame.

And like to wheels such as a clock supply,
So turning that the first scarce seems to move,
While to the sight the last appears to fly;
These lucid circles dancing even so,
According to their several shares of love,
Appeared endued with motion swift or slow.
From one, of beauty, as I mark'd, supreme,
Issued a splendour, glowing brilliantly,
All others far surpassing in its beam.
And three times around Beatrice it wound,
Pouring forth so divine a minstrelsy,
My fancy faileth to record the sound.
Wherefore my pen leaps o'er, unskill'd to write;
For if imagination fail,—still less
May words essay to paint such colours bright.
"O holy sister, thy impassion'd prayer,
And love, impell'd by fond devotedness,
Have drawn me down from yonder mansion fair."
Thus to my Lady did that flame elect,
Soon as its course around her it had stay'd,
Its voice in answer to her words direct.
Then she: "O holy one, to whom our Lord
The keys of this our wondrous joy convey'd,—
Those keys, from heaven sent down, for man's reward,

Question him more or less as pleaseth thee
Concerning faith—that faith by which of old
Thou wert endued with power to walk the sea.
His love, his hope, his faith are manifest
To thee, who dost that heavenly Glass behold,
In which all things are visibly express'd.
But since by the true faith this kingdom gain'd
Her citizens, 'tis meet that he disclose
Its power, and what by faith may be obtain'd."
His armour as the bachelor puts on,
Nor speaks, until the master doth propose
The question they are to contend upon;
So I with reasons arm'd me, to prepare
(While she was speaking, and I silent heard)
For such a theme and such a questioner.
"Good Christian, what is Faith, to me make known:"
Straightway I raised my forehead at the word,
Unto the light whence issued such a tone:
Then turned to Beatrice, who on me bent
Such an approving look as said: "Let flow
The streams within thy secret bosom pent."
"O may that grace which bids me now confess
Before so great a Captain, power bestow,
That I may worthily my thoughts express:

Father," I added, "as of old was taught
  By thy dear brother's pen unerring, (who
  Rome through thy means to pure religion brought)—
Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and
  The evidence of things not yet in view:
  This is its essence as I understand."
"Thou comprehendest rightly," then I heard,
  "If to thy reason it appeareth clear,
  Why such a definition be preferr'd."
I answer'd him: "The mighty mysteries,
  Whose full reality is open'd here,
  Are so conceal'd on earth from mortal eyes,
That they exist but in belief alone,
  On which our hope is so entirely founded,
  That faith and substance are accounted one.
To this belief all righteousness we trace;
  On this alone our reasonings must be grounded;
  Hence faith instead of argument hath place."
Then heard I: "If, as understood by thee,
  Were understood all knowledge gain'd on earth,
  Then would be found no room for sophistry."
Thus breathed the spirit, warm'd with love and joy;
  Then added: "Of this coin is proved the worth,
  Both as regards the weight and the alloy.

But is it in thy purse?" "Yes," I replied,
"So shining and so round, it renders clear
All things that in its impress are descried."
From the deep light which there was glowing, sounded
These words anon: "Whence came this jewel dear,
On which is every other virtue founded?"
Then I: "The Spirit's most abundant shower,
Pour'd out upon the Pages New and Old,
Hath of itself a syllogistic power;
And hath convinced me with a strength so full,
That in comparison with it, I hold
Each other demonstration weak and dull."
Then he: "The Old and Latter Testament,
Which wrought conviction on thy faculties,—
What is the proof that they from God were sent?"
"The works that follow'd, proof sufficient bear,"
I said: "and nature, to accomplish these,
Ne'er heated iron, or anvil struck."—"Declare
Who gives to thee assurance," was replied,
"That these works had existence? He alone
Who would convince thee swears it—none beside."
"If without miracles the world was brought
To Christian faith," I said, "this one would be
A hundred times the greatest ever wrought:—

And so it was,—that, poor and hungry, thou
Enter'dst the field to cultivate that tree
Erst a rich vine—a stock unfruitful now."
This ended—sounded through the lofty sphere,
"O God we offer praises unto Thee,"
In tones well worthy of an Angel's ear.
And that great Chieftain, who from bough to bough
Had drawn me on, as he examin'd me,
Till the last leaves we had arrived at, now
Began again: "That grace, whose converse sweet
Informs thy mind, hath well instructed thee,
And so far furnish'd thee with utterance meet,
That I approve of what thou hast disclosed:
But now behoves thee thy belief declare,
And by what means it was to thee proposed."
"O sacred Sire, O Spirit, who dost ken
The faith which bore thee to the sepulchre,
Outstripping younger feet;" began I then,—
"You wish me to explain the mode whereby
This faith so rapidly within me strove;
And also wherein lay its energy.
I answer, I believe in one God,—sole—
Eternal—who, unmoved Himself, doth move
The universe by love's supreme controul."

"Proofs physical, and metaphysical
Not only have I; but through Moses, and
The Prophets, and the Gospel, and through all
The Psalms, and through your works, to which was given
A holy influence, I understand
The truth which floweth down to earth from heaven.
And in Three Persons is my faith confest—
An Essence, so conjoin'd, and yet so trine,
They equally admit of sunt and est.
And what the evangelic books reveal
Of this profound and blissful state divine,
Hath on my heart impress'd its truthful seal.
This is the source,—this is the spark, which spreads
To vivid flame; and, like a star in heaven
With splendour dight, o'er me effulgence sheds."
E'en as a master, from a servant hearing
Tidings that please—as soon as they are given,
His arms around him casts;—such kindly bearing
Was by the Apostolic light express'd;
Who, soon as my confessions he had heard,
Thrice, chanting loud, encircled me, and bless'd;
Such was the pleasure that my speech conferr'd.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXV.

ARGUMENT.

DANTE expresses a hope that his poem may be the means of restoring him with honour to his country. St. James examines him concerning Hope. St. John appears.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXV.

SHOULD it befal that e'er the sacred lay,
To which have lent their aid both Heaven and Earth,—
While year by year my body pined away—
O'ercome the cruelty that is my bar
From the fair fold where I a lamb had birth,
Foe to the ravening wolves its peace who mar;
With other voice, with other fleece shall I
Poet return; and at that shrine be crown'd
Which my baptismal laver did supply:
For there I enter'd on the faith, whose vow
Proclaims the souls to God's high service bound;
Hence Peter waved his hands round my brow.

Then tow'rds us moved a light from out that race,
Whence came the first-fruits of those Vicars true,
Left upon earth by Christ to fill His place.
To me, my Lady, fraught with joy intense;
"Behold, behold the sainted Baron, who
Draws to Galicia's land such crowd immense."
As when unto his partner's side, the Dove
Approaches near,—both fondly circling round,
And cooing, show the fervour of their love;
So these great heirs of immortality
Received each other; while they joyful sound
The praises of the food they share on high.
But when their gratulations ended were,
Each silent stood before me, and so glow'd,—
Mine eyes the fiery lustre could not bear.
Then Beatrice thus spake with smiling brow;
"O glorious soul, by whom the riches stow'd
In this our palace are described, do thou
Make Hope resound throughout this heavenly height:
Thou know'st, who didst personify it, oft
As Jesus o'er the Three shed stronger light."
"Lift up thy head; and be thy heart assured;
For all that come from earth to us aloft
Must by our fervent radiance be matured."

Such cheer to me the second flame address'd; 37
Whereat I lifted to the hills mine eyes,
Which erst with too great burden were opprest.
" Since our great Ruler wills of His free grace
That thou, admitted to his mysteries,
Should'st see, ere death, his loved ones face to face;
Whereby—the truth of this our Court reveal'd— 43
The hope that e'en on earth awakens love,
May comfort both to thee and others yield,
Say what it is, and how to thee it came;
And whence within thy heart its blossoms throve :"
Thus spake to me in turn the second flame.
And she, that pitying one,—the gentle guide— 49
Who imp'd my pinions for such lofty flight,
My words anticipating, thus replied :
" No child hath the Church militant, in whom
Hope is more strong, as seen in letters bright
Traced in that Sun, whose rays our band illume.
Wherefore a passage unto him is given 55
From Egypt to Jerusalem, or ere
He in the conflict to the end hath striven.
The other points (asked with the intent that he,
On his return to earth, may witness bear
How much that virtue is beloved by thee)

I leave to him;—not difficult are they,
Nor furnish boasting:—let him make reply;
And so may God his aiding grace convey."
Like scholar who his teacher doth obey,
When stored with knowledge is his memory;
And he would fain his readiness display;
"Hope," said I, "is an expectation sure
Of future glory—the effect of grace
And previous merit:—its effulgence pure
From many a star descends; but o'er me fell
The earliest radiance that my heart can trace
From His sweet songs—the Bard of Israel:
And thus the impassion'd Minstrel sang; 'In thee
Shall hope all they who know Thy name:'—and who
That owns my faith doth not in this agree?
Flow'd o'er me next his drops, like to the rain,
From thy Epistle; so that the rich dew
Receiving, I pour forth the same again."
The while I spoke, with swift and frequent glare,
From out the living breast of that bright fire
Flicker'd a lamp, like lightning quivering there;
Then breathed:—"The love of Hope, that in me still
Is burning, and was ever my desire,
During the conflict that I waged with ill,

Bids me again address thee; and my words,
Pleasant to thee, will be to me the same;
Hearing thee tell what promise Hope affords."
Then I: "From both the Testaments 'tis plain
(And here self evident) what their high aim,
Whom God to enjoy his friendship doth ordain.
Isaiah says that in their native land
Each with a twofold vesture shall be dight;
And by that term, this life I understand.
The same more clearly hath your brother shown,
When, speaking of the garments pure and white,
This revelation he to us makes known."
Ere the completion of his speech, I heard
Above us sound, "My hope in Thee:"—anon
All the bright circles answer'd at the word.
Then from among them issuing, I survey
A star so bright,—had Cancer such an one,
A winter's month would be continual day.
And as a virgin, rising joyously,
Enters the dance, bent only on improving
The nuptial welcome, not through vanity;
So did I witness that attemper'd flame
Draw near the two who in a ring were moving,
(As well the ardour of their love became)

And mingle with their words, and with their strains;
The while my Lady watch'd with tranquil look,
Like bride who silent and composed remains.
"Lo, this is he who on the bosom lay
Of our great Pelican; and undertook,
Beneath the cross, his high emprise that day."
My escort thus address'd me;—not that she
That Saint regarded with more earnest view
Than erst she did before she spoke to me;—
But like one gazing with intensity,
To see the sun eclipsed in part, till through
Desire to see, he cannot ought descry;
So on that last blest light I fix'd mine eye,
The while I heard: "Why daze thine eyesight so,
Striving a thing that is not to espy?
My body upon earth is earth; and still
With others shall remain on earth below,
Till God the number of the elect fulfil.
In the blest cloister, with the garments twain,
Dwell the two lights, who hence went up on high:
And this proclaim, when earth you reach again."
This said,—the flaming circle sought repose;
And with it straight was still'd the melody,
Which from the three in blended sound arose,—

Still'd, like to oars that, dashing through the brine,—
  If rest be needed, or if risk arise,
  Are all suspended at the steerer's sign.
Oh! how my mind was struck by fear of ill,
  When, turning round to look on Beatrice,
  I saw her not,—though I was near her still,
And in the happy realm of Paradise!

PARADISO.

CANTO XXVI.

ARGUMENT.



St. John examines Dante concerning Charity, or the Love of God. Interview with Adam.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXVI.

While I with dazzled eyes, in doubt remain'd,
Forth from the lucid flame that quell'd my sight
A voice arose which my attention chain'd;
Saying; "Till thou regain thy visual sense,
Now lost upon my form, it will be right
That we by converse find some recompense.
Say then what object rests thy soul upon;
For know—and let this confidence be thine—
Thy sight, although bewilder'd, is not gone:
Since she who leads thee through this region blest
Hath in her look that influence divine
Which Ananias' hand of old possess'd."

" Let her," I said, " or soon or late impart
Relief unto the eyes, through which She pass'd,
Whose fire is ever glowing in my heart.
The Good Supreme, who makes this Court content,
Is unto me the first as well as last
Of all the love that Scripture texts present."
The self-same voice that late relieved the dread
Which with such sudden blaze my sense o'erthrew,
To speak again incited me, and said;
" Behoves thee now through finer sieve to effect
Thy explanation, and to tell me who
To such a target did thy bow direct."
Then I: " By what Philosophy hath taught,
And by the Revelation flowing hence,
This love in me its first impression wrought:
For Goodness, rightly understood, to love
Excites, and in proportion to the sense
Of its abundance, such its power to move.
Unto that Essence then—so excellent,
That good of every kind, beyond it found,
Is but a ray from its effulgence sent—
With stronger impulse than to aught beside,
By love inflamed, the mind of each must bound,
In whom the maxims of this truth abide.

Such truth is render'd plain unto my mind
By him who the first love to me displays
Of all the eternal substances :—I find
That by the unerring One the same is seal'd,
Who, speaking of Himself to Moses, says :
'To thee shall all my goodness be reveal'd.'
Declared moreover is this truth by thee
At the opening of thy pages, which proclaim
In clearest terms the mighty mystery."
Then heard I this : "Since reason's voice approves,
And Revelation too enjoins the same—
Reserve for God the choicest of thy loves.
But tell me if by other cords thou feel
Thyself attracted unto God ;—and so
All the constraining bonds of love reveal."
Why Christ's blest Eagle this enquiry made,
I straight discover'd, and the point whereto
He wish'd to lead me; wherefore I obey'd.—
"Every incentive that the soul can bind,
And make it turn to God, accordant is
With the warm gratitude that fills my mind :—
The existence of the world,—my being,—and
The death He bore that I might live, and this
Bright object of our hope, the promised land,

With the conviction spoken of before, 61
Have drawn me from the sea of erring love,
And of the true have set me on the shore.
Love for each plant that in the garden grows
Of the Eternal Gardener I prove,
Proportion'd to the goodness He bestows."
I ceased; when through the heaven resounded slowly, 67
By myriads sung, a strain surpassing sweet,—
My Lady joining—"Holy, Holy, Holy."
And as through fervour of the piercing light,
Which the soul's active spirit runs to meet,
Is broken through the slumber of the night;
And the awaken'd one hates what he sees; 73
(So lost to sense of all around he is,
Till judgment re-illume his faculties;)
Thus from my eyes was each impediment
Dash'd by a ray from those of Beatrice,
Which thousand miles their bright effulgence sent.
Wherefore—my dazzled eyesight now revived,— 79
I made enquiry, still in some amaze,
What spirit had in the mean time arrived.
"Within these beams," to me my Lady said,
"Views his Creator with admiring gaze
The earliest soul that primal Wisdom made."

E'en as a plant that to the passing breeze
  Bends—and again its lofty stem uprears,
  Through impulse of its native tendencies;
Thus to the ground I bow'd me as she spoke,
  Awe-struck—and then once more dismiss'd my fears;
  So strong a wish to speak my spirit woke.
"O thou, sole fruit," I answer'd, "upon earth
  Brought into being, ripe—O sire of man,
  To whom is daughter both by law and birth
Each married woman—thee do I implore
  Devoutly; and since thou my wish dost scan,
  Through eagerness to hear, I say no more."
As by the movement of his furry skin
  His feelings oft an animal makes known,
  Displaying outwardly the joy within—
So did the first created soul attest
  By the outward lustre of his form alone
  How great his joy to answer my request:
Then breathed: "Thy wish is understood by me—
  Though utter'd not—with impress clearer far
  Than whatsoe'er is best perceived by thee;
Since I behold it in that Mirror true,
  In which—though other things reflected are,
  No image of Itself is given to view.

You ask of me how long the time, since I
Was placed in that high garden, whence a stair
So lofty brought you to this region high;
How long its lovely prospects I enjoy'd—
Why to God's wrath I was obnoxious there—
And what the dialect by me employ'd.
'Twas not alone through tasting of the tree,
My son, that I so long in banishment
Remain'd, but that I broke God's high decree.
There, whence thy faithful Lady Virgil drew,
Wishing to reach these blessed courts, I spent
Four thousand, and three hundred years, and two.
And while I dwelt on earth 'twas mine to ken
The sun relume the lights he passes through
Nine hundred times united to thrice ten.
The language that I spoke was lost to man,
Ere Nimrod and his most audacious crew
Their not-to-be-accomplish'd work began:
For no effect by human reason wrought
Was ever lasting—through the strong desire
Of man for change, by starry influence taught.
Nature ordaineth man to speak; but she
Leaves it to you a language to acquire,
Or this, or that, as may your pleasure be.

Ere I descended to the gulph of hell,
The Good Supreme, from whom proceeds that joy
Which swathes me round, was called by mortals El:
Eli the name that afterwards men chose,—
Since custom, altering the words they employ,
Is like the leaf—one comes, another goes.
Upon that mount which highest rears its head
Above the sea, so many hours were mine
(All that in innocence or guilt were sped)
As the sun travels, ere his rays decline."

PARADISO.

CANTO XXVII.

ARGUMENT.

St. Peter severely animadverts upon the avarice of his successors; and the Angels sympathise in his indignation. Dante is borne up to the ninth heaven.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXVII.

"Glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!"
Now throughout Paradise was heard to sound;
So that my soul in ecstacy was lost.
All that I saw appear'd to me one smile
Caught from the universal world around,—
My eyes and ears inebriate the while.
O bliss ineffable! O rapture pure!
O life of love and peace! O wealth, that knows
No wish beyond, unsullied and secure!
Stood the four torches burning in my sight;
When lo, the one that first before me rose
Began to clothe itself in stronger light;

And manifested shortly such aspect
As Jupiter would bear, were Mars and he
Birds, and an interchange of plumes to effect.
That Foresight, which to all who here abide
Assigns their proper lot and ministry,
Had silenced the blest band on every side,
When I these accents heard: "Should now the hue
That I assume be changed, feel no surprise;
E'en while I speak will all the choir you view
Their colour change.—He who on earth, my place,
My place usurps,—my place which in the eyes
Of God's own Son is vacant, hath long space
Render'd my burial ground a sink abhorr'd
Of blood and filth, which to the inveterate foe
Who fell from heaven, doth high delight afford.
Dyes of the self-same tint which eve and morn
The clouds assume, from Phœbus' ardent glow,
Beheld I then the expanse of heaven adorn."
And like a modest damsel, who not fearing
For her own self, yet wears a timid mien,
The story of another's shame but hearing;
Such change the look of Beatrice display'd;
And such eclipse the heaven endured, I ween,
As when the Godhead was an offering made.

Words then proceeded from his lips, in tone
So greatly changed from what it was before,
Not greater was the change his face had shown.
"The spouse of Christ was nourish'd not of old
On mine, on Linus,' and on Cletus' gore,
To teach the practice of amassing gold:
But to attain this life of happiness
Calixtus, Pius, Sextus, holy band,
With Urban suffer'd, after long distress.
We never meant that Christians should be placed,
By our successors, part on the right hand,
The other part upon the left debased:
Or that the keys entrusted to my care
Should be a sign for warriors to unfold,
And, as a standard, against Christians bear:
Or, that my figure on a seal should show,
Attached to lying privileges sold;
Whence oft suffused with ruddy shame I glow.
Rapacious wolves, in shepherd's clothing dress'd,
Are seen from high throughout the pastures fair:
O arm of God, why art thou still at rest!
Our blood do Gascons now prepare to drink,
And Cahors' greedy band.—O promise rare,
To what a vile conclusion dost thou sink!

But by that Providence, which Scipio taught 61
To claim for Rome an universal reign,
Shall soon, I deem, a powerful aid be brought;
And thou, my son, do thou this truth reveal;
Since unto earth thou must return again:
What I conceal not, do not thou conceal."
As vapours through our atmosphere descending 67
Come charged with flakes of snow, what time the horn
Of Capricorn unto the sun is bending;
So I beheld that bright and smiling air,
Deck'd with triumphant meteors, upward borne,
Which had with us been making sojourn there.
Their countenances did mine eye essay 73
To follow, till the intermediate space
Became so great, the foremost pass'd away.
Whereat my Lady, who anon discern'd
That lost to sight was now their every trace,
Exclaim'd; "Look down, and see how thou hast turn'd."
On bending down, I saw that from the time 79
I look'd before, my progress I had made
Through a fourth portion of that sphere sublime;
So that I kenn'd Ulysses' track, beyond
The pass of Gades; and the shore survey'd,
Whence Jove erst bore Europa, burden fond:

And further glimpses of this little spot
Had I attained; but Phœbus 'neath my feet,
Entering another sign, permitted not.
The enamour'd Mind, that with my Lady never
Ceases to interchange communion sweet,
Strove to attract me to her more than ever:
And if, or Nature, forms of flesh unfolding—
Or Art, her images of fairest dye—
E'er captive led the souls of those beholding;
All these collected would appear as nought
Compared to the delight that met mine eye,
When from her face one smile divine I caught.
Then she, by whom the inspiring look was given,
Bore me from Leda's beauteous nest away;
And snatch'd me upward to the swiftest heaven;
Whose liveliest and most lofty regions were
So like each other—that I cannot say
The part which Beatrice selected there:
But she who witness'd my desire, her voice
Brought to my aid, with such a radiant smile,
That God, methought, did in her face rejoice.
Here is the nature of that motion found
To take its rise, which, (quiet though the while
The centre be) moves all things else around.

This heaven exists but in the Mind Divine,
  Where kindled is the Love that turns it round;
  And thence is shower'd its influence benign:
This, light and love enfold with single zone,
  As it the others; while the abode profound
  He who surrounds it regulates alone.
Its motion doth no other heaven contain;
  But others take their measurement from this,
  As ten is measured both by five and twain.
How in such vessel Time its roots receives
  Unto thy mind now manifested is;
  And how in others are contain'd the leaves.
O lust of gold, by whom is man immers'd
  To such a depth, that he attempts in vain
  To draw his eyes from out thy waves accurst!
Some buds of promise may the will put forth;
  But through continual beating of the rain
  The blighted fruit becomes of little worth.
In children only see we faith abound,
  And simple innocence; for both have fled
  Ere down upon the youthful cheek be found.
The child, yet lisping, keeps the fasts; who soon,
  Advanced in years, devours or meat or bread,
  Whatever be the season or the moon.

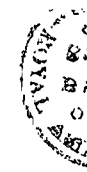
And such a one, yet lisping, loves and hears
His mother; who would wish to see her dead,
When he speaks plainly in his riper years.
So also changes soon to black from white
The daughter of yon orb, by whom is led
The morning, when he quits the shades of night.
And lest these facts should cause surprise to thee,
Know that on earth no Governor bears sway;
Whence is deceived the human family.
But ere that January be no more
A winter month, through failings day by day,
So loudly shall these spheres supernal roar,
That Fortune, whence such changes we expect,
Shall turn the poops to where the prows appear,
So that the fleet shall make its way direct,
And every plant its proper fruit shall bear.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXVIII.

ARGUMENT.

DANTE in the ninth heaven is vouchsafed a sight of the Deity, described as a dazzling point, surrounded by the nine orders of Angels, who correspond to the nine heavens, over which they respectively preside.



PARADISO.

CANTO XXVIII.

When she who doth my soul imparadise 1
The sad condition had to me made clear
Of mortals, sunk in ignorance and vice;
As in a mirror doth a torch's light,
Suddenly flaming from behind, appear
To one who had it not in thought or sight;
Whereat he turns him round, that he may know 7
If it speak truth; and such accord descries
As music hath with metre;—even so
Was I, (for memory bears it still in mind)
Looking a second time on those fair eyes,
Whence Love his cords obtain'd my soul to bind.

And as, on turning round, mine eye was struck
By that which in this volume doth appear
To all who on its heavenly motion look,
I saw a Point, whence came so sharp a light,
That none its penetrating aim may bear;
But whoso strives, perforce must close his sight.
The smallest star that from the earth we see,
Comparing one with other, to our ken,
Set by its side, a moon would seem to be;
Distant—as far perhaps as from the light
That paints it, is perceived a halo, when
The mist beneath it thickest is to sight:—
Around this Point, a circling fire was hurl'd
So rapidly, that not in speed could vie
The swiftest motion which enwraps the world.
And by another this was compass'd round;
This by a third, that by a fourth, and by
A fifth the fourth;—that by a sixth was bound.
A seventh follow'd, arching high a space
Of such extent, not Juno's messenger,
When most complete, could such a span embrace.
An eighth and ninth succeeded; and each zone
Roll'd with a slower motion, as they were
Number'd in distance from the central One.

Of all these flames, the most sincere and sheen
Nearest the One pure Spark its lustre shed,
Because most nourish'd by its rays, I ween.
My tender escort, who immediate kenn'd
The deep suspense that rack'd my bosom, said:
"Heaven and all Nature on that Point depend.
Behold the circle nearest it, and know
It whirls so swift by reason of the love
That ever keeps it in a fervent glow."
"If the same order in the world obtain'd,
As that by which these wheels," I answer'd, "move,
Then should I rest in what has been explain'd;
But in the world of sense 'tis different far;
And more divine the things that there obtain,
The more remote they from the centre are.
Wherefore, if my desire may now repose,
In this most wondrous and angelic fane,
Which light and love alone for boundaries knows,
'Tis meet that I should learn the reason why
The copy and the model disagree;
Since of myself I labour fruitlessly."
"If to unravel such a knot," she said,
"Thy fingers have not the ability,
No wonder;—through neglect 'tis harder made."

My Lady spake, and added: "Would'st thou then 61
Allay thy thirst,—hear what I shall express;
And sharpen thus thine intellectual ken.—
The heavenly circles vary in their size,
According to the virtue, more or less,
Given to their several parts by the All-wise.
Greater the goodness, greater is the good; 67
And greater good requires, if equally
The parts be fill'd, a greater magnitude.
Therefore the heaven which with it whirls around
The universe, must with that sphere agree
Where Wisdom, and where Love the most abound.
If, therefore, to the virtue is applied 73
Your measurement, and not to what you see,
(The substances that circling are descried,)
A marvellous accordance will you find
(The extent conform'd to the ability)
In every heaven to its presiding Mind.
As, when the blast of Boreas hath pass'd by, 79
The atmosphere remains serene and bright,
Gladden'd through all the regions of the sky—
For the dense vapours that were rife ere while
Are now dispersed; and heaven in beauty dight
On every side is beaming forth a smile."—

Such was my joy, what time an answer clear
Vouchsafed my gracious Lady, nought disguising,
And made the truth like star in heaven appear.
And when she ceased, throughout their compass vast
The circles shot forth sparks, like those arising
From red hot iron, when in a mould 'tis cast:
Each spark shot forth such lustres, they amounted
In number unto millions more than e'en
The double every square on chess board counted.
Hosanna rang throughout, until the lay
Arrived at the fix'd Point, whose light serene
Keeps each to its own place, and shall for aye.
Then she who saw my inward doubting, said:
"Know this—that Cherubin and Seraphin
Have in the two first circles been display'd.
Thus swiftly follow they their bonds of love,
That they resemblance to the Point may win;
So gifted, as their vision soars above.
The Loves that the succeeding circle shows
Are Thrones denominated by the All-wise,
Since the first Hierarchy they compose.
And thou shouldst know, they all enjoyment find,
As with profounder vision they their eyes
Fix on the Truth, in which rests every mind.

Hence is it seen how perfect bliss is founded
  In the act of sight, and not of love; for this
  Comes afterwards;—and as fair deeds abounded,
(Born of good-will and grace, through heavenly aid,)
  Given in such measure is the sight of bliss:
  Thus happiness proceeds through every grade.
The ensuing Hierarchy, blooming ever
  In this abode of sempiternal spring,
  Which the nocturnal Aries injures never,
Hosanna chants, with joy that knows no close,
  In threefold melody—embodying
  The threefold orders that the choir compose.
In this are found the triple bands divine—
  First Dominations, Virtues secondly;—
  Powers next to these, the third in order shine.
Lo, Princedoms, and Archangels then advance,
  And circling join the grand festivity;
  Angels alone complete the joyous dance.
These various ranks all raise their looks above,
  And have such influence downward too, that they
  Draw all tow'rds God, as they are drawn, by love.
With such desire did Dionysius try
  Their numerous parts and orders to array,
  That he distinguish'd them as well as I.

But in their ranks some change did Gregory make;
  Wherefore as soon as in this heaven his eyes
  He open'd, smiled he at his own mistake.
And if a truth so secret was display'd
  By mortal man, let this not cause surprise;
  For one who saw it the discovery made,
And opened up the wonders of these skies."



PARADISO.

CANTO XXIX.

ARGUMENT.

BEATRICE explains the object of God in creating the Angels and inferior beings —viz. that he delighted to multiply images of Himself. She reproves the clergy for speculating on abstruse questions, instead of spreading the Gospel; and bitterly inveighs against the Popes for their inventions of pardons and indulgences.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXIX.

LONG as Latona's double progeny,
  Surmounted by the Ram and by the Scales,
  Facing each other horizontally,
Are evenly suspended in the air,—
  And thus remain, until the balance fail;
  Each parting for a different hemisphere;
So long—her visage painted by a smile,
  In silence Beatrice was gazing on
  The Point which overcame my sight erewhile.
She then began: "I speak, nor do I wait to hear
  Thy wishes—they are on that mirror shown,
  In which are present every when and where.—

Not goodly stores for His own use to improve,
  Which cannot be—but that His splendour might
  Reflected say, 'I am'—the Eternal Love,
In His eternity, ere time began,
  And unconfined by limits, took delight
  New combinations of His love to plan.
Nor was it erst inert, as laid asleep;
  Since there was no before, or after, ere
  The Holy Spirit moved upon this deep.
Matter, and form, together join'd or no,
  At one unerring act created were,
  As start three arrows from a three-string'd bow.
And as the ray in amber, crystal, glass,
  So swiftly beams, that to the sharpest eye
  From first to last no interval may pass;
So, in His triple work the beam was thrown
  By the Almighty Sire most rapidly,
  Without distinction in the process known.
At the same time unto the substances
  Were ranks apportion'd; and since they are graced
  With essence pure, of highest grade were these.
Pure power the lowest station was assign'd;
  Matter and form were in the middle placed,
  Conjoin'd by cords, which no one may unbind.

Long tract of ages intervened, (so taught 37
St. Jerome) after angels were created,
Or ere the world was into being brought:
But the account I have inserted here,
In many a page of Scripture is related,
As, if thou search it closely, will appear.
Nor does it reasonable seem to be 43
That these prime Movers should so long exist
Bereft of their perfection.—Now have three
Of thy desires been laid to rest; since thou
Know'st where these living ones did erst subsist;
And when they were created first, and how.
Sooner than twenty might be counted, fell 49
One portion of the angelic host, and brought
Confusion to the earth on which ye dwell:
Faithful to God the others did remain,
And to such height of ecstacy was wrought,
They never from the circling dance refrain.
The pride of him, whom thou hast seen with all 55
The burden of the world above opprest,
Was the dire cause of the unhappy fall.
Those whom thou seest here, with humble mind
Confess'd themselves the work of heavenly love,
And to their lofty office were assign'd.

Whence, through enlightening grace, and their own merit,
Their ken was elevated to such height, [61
That they a firm and ample will inherit.
And doubt not, (but as truth my words believe)
That, so the heart be open, in God's sight
'Tis counted merit when we grace receive.
Now may this bright assembly be survey'd; 67
Nor to inspection is there any bar:—
My words believed, you lack no other aid.
But in your schools since such is said to be
The nature of the Angels, that they are
Endued with reason, will, and memory;
More will I add that thou the truth may'st see, 73
Which upon earth is so confounded by
Equivocations, and vain subtlety.
These Beings, since God's face was their delight,
(Where all things open and developed lie)
To ought beside ne'er turn away their sight;
Whence interrupted not is their clear view 79
By object fresh;—their's no necessity
Transactions past by memory to renew.
Thus men on earth are dreaming, while awake,
Ignorant some—some lying knowingly;
As these of crime, so those of shame partake.

In your philosophy ye do not go
By one straight path; so greatly is your wit
Transported with itself, and outward show.
And e'en this vanity moves less disgust
In heaven above, than when the Holy Writ
Is or despised, or from its meaning thrust.
Ye reck not of the blood that was expended
To sow it; and how great reward is his,
By whom with humbleness it is defended.
Each strives to make appearance, and be heard;
Hence the inventions and the subtleties
That preachers use, while silent is the Word.
One says that at our Saviour's death, the moon
Drew back, and hid the sun from mortal view,
Coming between, when he was in his noon:
Others—that he himself his light withdrew;
And that by Spaniards and by Indians too
Was seen the eclipse, as well as by the Jew.
Lapi and Bindi not so numerous are
In Florence, as the fables that are used
On these points in the pulpits every year;
So that the flocks, who know no better, turn
From pasture full of wind—yet unexcused,
Because the evil they could not discern.

Christ said not to his earliest congregation,
'Go, and with lies the people lead astray,'
But: 'Testify the truth to every nation:'
And this injunction they so well obey'd,
Fighting the battle of the faith,—that they
Their shields and lances of the Gospel made.
Now goes the preacher forth with quibbles, and
Buffooneries; and if a laugh he raise,
He swells his cowl, and makes no more demand.
But in that cowl such bird doth build its nest,
That could the people on his features gaze,
They'd see the pardon whereupon they rest;
And after which the world is now so mad,
That faith in any kind of promise may,
Without a voucher for its truth, be had.
Fattens his hog on these St. Anthony;
And many others, worse than hogs; who pay
In uncoin'd money for the goods they buy.
But since digression causes much delay,
Tow'rds the straight path do thou direct thine eyes,
That both the time be shorten'd and the way.
Up to such myriads do these Natures mount,
That they surpass our finite faculties;
Nor tongue, nor fancy may their numbers count:

And if thou mark'st what Daniel hath reveal'd,
Thou wilt perceive that in his thousands, he
Hath the determinate amount conceal'd.
The primal Light, who sheds His rays o'er all,
Is by them each received as variously
As are the forms on which His splendours fall.
And as according to the light that flows
On each, their fervour differs in degree,
Thus love's sweet flame with varied ardour glows.
Since then so multiplied the Mirrors are
Wherein the Eternal parts Himself, while He,
Whole as before, remaineth One—how far
Surpassing thought his height and breadth must be!"

PARADISO.

CANTO XXX.

ARGUMENT.

In the empyrean, or heaven of pure light, Dante is vouchsafed a sight of the celestial Host. Angels and Saints, clad in white robes, and seated on thrones, are beholding themselves in the river of God—i.e.: enjoying the fulness of Grace, in the immediate presence of the Deity.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXX.

Six thousand miles, perchance, from us are glowing
The noontide rays, while in this hemisphere
Already are the shadows downward bowing;
When from the midst of heav'n's vast cope unfurl'd
Above us, now begins to disappear
Some star, beheld in this our nether world;
And as the brightest handmaid of the day
Advances farther, star by star is gone,
Till at the last the fairest melts away;
E'en so the triumph, ever dancing round
The Point which dazzled me to look upon,
(Seeming enclosed by that Itself doth bound,)

By slow degrees was from my sight removed ;
Wherefore, deprived of such bright imagery,
I turn'd again mine eyes on Her I loved.
If all that hath been written in her praise
In one encomium could included be,
'T were slight, compared with that I now would raise.
Beauty I saw, transcending human sense
So far, that He who fashion'd it alone
Reaps the full measure of enjoyment thence.
Wishing to paint it, feel I such despair,
That into greater trouble am I thrown
Than tragic bards or comic ever were ;
For as the sun o'erpowers the enfeebled eye,
So, the remembrance of that smile divine
Hath robb'd my soul of every faculty.
From the first day her countenance was seen
By me on earth, until this view was mine,
My raptured song hath ne'er suspended been.
But now 'tis time I set the attempt aside
To trace her beauty in my feeble lays,
As Limner, who his utmost skill hath plied ;
And even so, I leave the theme to those
Whose loftier trumpet may record her praise ;
Bringing this arduous subject to a close.

With gesture and with look commanding, she
Began : " From out the vast celestial zone,
Unto the heaven of light arrived are we ;—
Light intellectual, and full of love !
Love of true bliss, where every joy is known ;
Joy, every other sweetness far above !
Here shall the twofold bands of Paradise
Be seen by thee—one clad in the same dress
That at the judgment shall delight thine eyes."
Like to a flash, which bursting suddenly
Upon the visual powers, doth so oppress
The sense, that plainest things we may not see ;
Thus was a living light around me brought ;
Whose dazzling veil made all things disappear ;
So that mine eyesight could distinguish nought.
" The Love, that calms this tranquil heaven, the same
Sweet influence sheds on all within its sphere ;
Making the candle suited to its flame."
Soon as these accents brief had sunk within
My mind, I felt transported to a height
Far above that which human strength may win ;
And with fresh power my vision was renew'd,
So that no ray, however pure and bright,
The vigour of my ken could have subdued.

Light I beheld, that like a stream was flowing,
All bright with silver rays, two banks between,
In hues of spring most marvellously glowing:
Forth from the river, living Sparks arose;
Which, mid the Flowers alighting, shone serene;
E'en as enchased in gold the ruby shows:
Then, as inebriate with the odorous sense,
They plunged again within the mystic flood;
And as one enter'd, rose another thence.
"The strong desire by which thou art possess'd
To understand the wonders thou hast view'd,
Pleases me more, the more it fills thy breast.
But ere a thirst so great may be allay'd,
Behoves thee of this limpid stream to drink;"
So spake the Sun, whereon my eyes were stay'd:
Then added: "Know, the stream, and Topazes,
Which come and go, disporting o'er the brink,
The smiling Flowers too, are but images
To usher in the truth:—and though these things
Are easy of themselves, thou lackest power
To reach, as yet, such high imaginings.
Turns not a babe with more avidity
To seek its mother's milk, if late the hour
To which its sleep hath been prolong'd—than I

Turn'd, to make better mirrors of mine eyes,
Bending me downward to the wave profound,
That to the sight new energy supplies:
And as the fringes of mine eyelids near'd
The sacred stream, I saw its form was round,
Instead of long, as lately it appear'd.
Then, like to persons that a mask have worn,
Who seem a different aspect to present,
When from their features the disguise is torn;
E'en so, methought, the Flowers and Sparks, (impell'd
To greater joy) such changes underwent,
Heaven's twofold Courts distinctly I beheld.
O splendour of the Godhead, by whose aid
I saw the triumph of the kingdom true,
Give me the power to tell what I survey'd!
A light there is above, which plainly shows
The great Creator to the creature, who
In seeing Him alone can find repose;
And in a circle spreads to such degree,
That for the sun would its circumference
A girdle of too great dimensions be.
Its essence one vast ray—reflecting light
Unto a circle far removed, which thence
Derives both its existence and its might.

And as a cliff looks down upon the bed
Of some clear stream, to see how richly crown'd
With flowers and foliage is its lofty head;
So, all from earth who hither e'er return'd,
Seated on more than thousand thrones around,
Within the Eternal Light themselves discern'd:
And if the very lowest step receives
A light so great, how wonderful must be
This rose expanded to its utmost leaves!
Mine eyes nor by the amplitude, nor height
Were dazzled; but took in the quantity
And quality of all that vast delight.
Distant or near—'tis still the same; for where
God without secondary causes sways,
The law of nature hath no influence there.
Within the yellow of the Rose eternal
Which spreads its petals, redolent of praise,
Unto the Sun whose beams are ever vernal,
Like one who her desire to speak suppresses,
Me Beatrice drew with her; as she cried:
"See the vast number of these snow white dresses!
See how extensive is our City;—see
Our benches are so nearly occupied,
That few new comers may admitted be.

In that great seat whereon the lofty crown
  Holds in attracted gaze thy wondering eye,
  Ere to this marriage supper thou sit down,
Shall be enthroned imperial Henry, who
  Will come that he may govern Italy,
  But ill disposed for regulations new.
The blind desire that constitutes your curse
  Hath made you like the infant babe, who dies
  Of hunger, and yet drives away the nurse:
And such a Pontiff then your Church shall sway,
  That he by open arms and subtleties
  The efforts of great Henry shall gainsay.
But from his holy office soon shall God
  Expel, and drive him down to that foul place
  Where Simon Magus hath his curst abode,—
To depth profounder thrusting Boniface."

PARADISO.

CANTO XXXI.

ARGUMENT.

DESCRIPTION of the heavenly Rose continued. St. Bernard is sent by Beatrice, who is still visible at a distance through the transparent empyrean. Dante contemplates the Virgin Mary.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXXI.

In semblance like unto the whitest Rose
Was thus the sacred band to me display'd,
Which for his spouse, in death our Saviour chose.
But those glad winged Beings, that record
His goodness, whose glad tidings they obey'd,
And viewing, chant the glory of their Lord,
(E'en as a troop of bees now seek the flowers,
And now return with all the store they obtain,
To lay it up amid their waxen bowers)—
Were on the Rose descending from above,
Whence from its numerous leaves again they soar
Back to the realm where ever dwells their Love.

The looks of all were bright with living flame,
With gold their pinions—and their forms so white
No snow such perfect purity could claim.
Fanning their plumage, as with wing untired
From seat to seat they on the flower alight,
They impart the peace and love they have acquired.
Nor by their rapid passage, as they fly
Betwixt the Flower and Fountain of their bliss,
Was aught of splendour lost unto mine eye.
For with such warmth the ray divine is sent
Throughout the universe, as right it is,
That there arises no impediment.
In this blest realm where spirits of ancient days
And modern meet, in endless bliss to dwell,
All to one point their sight and ardours raise.
O Trinal Light—Thyself one single star,
Who with thy sparks contentest them so well,
Look down, and see the storm in which we are!
If the Barbarians, (coming from that land
O'er which, as round she wheels with her dear son,
Doth Elicë take up her daily stand)
Beholding Rome and all her buildings vast,
When like the Lateran mortal works were none,
Into extreme astonishment were cast;

I who from earth to an immortal fane 37
Had pass'd,—from time into eternity—
From Florence to a people just and sane—
What great astonishment belike was mine!
Surely betwixt amaze and joy did I
To shut my ears, and close my lips incline.
And like a pilgrim who with fond delight 43
Surveys the temple he has vow'd to see,
And hopes e'en now its wonders to recite;
So through that living light with searching ken
The varied ranks I view'd repeatedly,
Now up, now down, now round and round again.
Looks I beheld, to charity inclining, 49
Fringed with another's light, and their own smile,
And gestures, every seemly grace combining.
E'en now the general form of Paradise
My sight had taken in; although the while
On no one part were firmly fix'd mine eyes.
And with new ardour kindled, I anon 55
Turn'd round unto my Lady to inquire
Of things which doubtfully I reason'd on.
An answer came; but what I sought was lost;
For lo, instead of her—my soul's desire,
An old man, clothed like that resplendent host.

Beam'd on his cheek and brow, as 't were, a stream
Of joy benign—his look compassionate,
Such as a tender father might beseem.
" And where is she?" I sudden cried;—when he:
" To end the longings of thy anxious state,
By Beatrice impell'd, I come to thee.
And to the highest grade of the third round
If thou look up, she will appear once more,
Throned in the seat that her deserts have found."
I look'd above, and not a word replied;
And saw that she a beauteous chaplet wore,
The eternal rays reflecting on each side.
So great a distance is not mortal eye,
When in the lowest depths of ocean cast,
From that high realm whence thunder rends the sky,
As was my sight from Beatrice removed;
And yet the intervening space so vast
No obstacle to clearest vision proved.
" O Lady, upon whom my hopes are placed,
And who, to work out my security,
Hast left Hell's precincts with thy footsteps traced,—
For all the wondrous things I have survey'd,
My gratitude and praise are due to thee,
In whom all power and goodness are display'd:

A slave before, thou hast released me—thou
By every art and mode that could be tried
Didst win the freedom that I cherish now.
Continue thy munificence to me,
So that my soul, which thou hast purified,
May loose its mortal bonds, approved by thee."
My prayer thus ended—she with smiling face
Seem'd to behold me, where she sate removed;
Then look'd unto the Eternal Fount of grace:
Whereat the aged Saint: "That thou may'st end
Successfully thy path, by Heaven approved,
Which Love's warm prayers enjoin me to befriend,—
Now o'er this garden stretch thine eyes; and they
Shall by the vision more acute be made
To bear the sharpness of the heavenly ray.
And may the Queen of heaven, who in my heart
Retains a place revered, her gracious aid
For her devoted Bernard's sake, impart.
Like one who, from Croatia come to see
Our Veronica, (image long adored)
Gazes, as though content he ne'er could be,—
Thus musing, while the relics are portray'd,—
"Jesus my God, my Saviour and my Lord,
O were thy features these I see display'd!"—

E'en such was I, while feasting on the view
Of his warm charity, who here below
That blessed peace by contemplation knew.
Then he: "O son of grace!—while such amaze
Wraps thee, this blessed life thou canst not know,
Holding thine eyes bent down in wondering gaze.
But view the circles, e'en the most remote,
Until the Queen upon her throne thou seest,
To whom this realm is subject and devote."
I raised mine eyes;—and as in morning's pride
More beauteous are the regions of the east,
Than those where Phœbus sinks at eventide;
So, travelling with my eyesight, as it were,
From vale to mount, I saw the extremity
More deck'd with splendour than the front appear.
And as the horizon is with lustre dight
On earth, what time the solar car draws nigh,
While other quarters show diminished light;
So, in the midst, a livelier lustre wore
That peaceful Oriflame; while either side
Relax'd the ardour it betray'd before.
And in that centre, with their wings outspread,
Thousands of joyous Angels I descried,
On each of whom a different ray was shed.

At their festivity and gladsome song
I saw the Virgin smile, whose rapture shot
Joy through the eyes of all that blessed throng:
And even did the words that I possess
Equal imagination, I should not
Dare the attempt her faintest charms to express.
When Bernard now perceived mine eyes intent,
And stedfast fix'd upon her glowing flame,
His own with holiest love on her were bent;
So that more ardent still my gaze became.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXXII.

ARGUMENT.

St. Bernard points out the two divisions of the Rose—viz. the Saints of the Old, and of the New Testament. Among these are seen Adam and Eve—John the Baptist—the Virgin Mary—the Angel Gabriel—St. Peter, &c., &c.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXXII.

GAZING on her whose Son brought peace to man, 1
That meditative soul instruction sweet
Pour'd forth, and thus in holy words began:
"The ancient wound that Mary bound and heal'd,
She open'd, who is sitting at her feet,
In form of perfect loveliness reveal'd.
Beneath her, ranking in the third degree, 7
Is Rachel seated there; and at her side
Is Beatrice, as thou may'st clearly see,—
Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, and she who
Was ancestress to the sweet Bard that cried,
'Have mercy on me Lord,' thus may'st thou view

One underneath another in their place,
  As I proceed to call them by their names,
  While through the rose each several leaf I trace.
Lo! sit in various degrees of power,
  Up to the seventh step, the Hebrew dames,
  Dividing all the petals of the flower:
For these are, as it were, a wall between
  The sacred stairs, dividing it in twain,
  According as their faith in Christ hath been.
On this side, where the flower may be perceived
  Perfect throughout its leaves, their ranks maintain
  Those who on Christ, about to come, believed:
On the other, where an interval is made—
  The semicircles showing vacancy—
  Are those whose eyes on Christ reveal'd were stay'd.
And as on this hand, doth the glorious station
  Of heaven's bright lady, and the seats that lie
  Beneath her, make so great a separation;
So, St. John's seat upon the other side;—
  Who in the desert pain and hunger chose;
  And, constant still, two years in hell was tried:
Beneath him also form a severing bound
  Augustin, Francis, Benedict, and those
  Beside, who occupy each lower round.

Now contemplate the Providence divine;
Whence Faith, as view'd on its two several sides,
Shall equally in this fair garden shine.
And know that downward from the lofty throne,
Which in the middle the two parts divides,
No one is there through merit of his own,
But through Another's; and upon conditions;
For all these souls freed from the body were,
Ere upon choice were founded their volitions.
This may you be convinced of (if due pains
You take to mark them, and their accents hear)
Both by their looks, and by their childish strains.
Yet now you doubt, and still your doubts withhold;
But though your bonds are intricate, yet I
Will strive your subtle reasonings to unfold.
Within this peaceful kingdom's wide domain
No room is to be found for casualty;
So neither found is hunger, thirst, or pain;
For as to a finger answereth a ring,
Thus, by immutable and strictest laws,
Is in this realm establish'd every thing.
Therefore the children that herein do press
To life eternal, not without a cause
Inherit excellence or more or less.

The King (who makes this blessed realm to bask
  In love and joy, so that throughout its space
  No one for more could e'en desire to ask)
Their souls creating in his glad aspect,
  As pleased him best, to each its proper grace
  Distributes; and let here suffice the effect.
And this disparity of mortals' doom
  Scripture marks clearly in the twins of old
  Who struggled when within their mother's womb.
Wherefore as is the colour of the hair,
  So doth the light divine, as meet we hold,
  Assign the wreaths of grace—to each his share:
And hence, without regard to what they 've done,
  In different gradations do they sit;
  As differ'd the first grace that on them shone.
Sufficed in early times the parent's faith,
  Conjoin'd with innocence, to make them fit
  To obtain salvation, and be freed from scath.
Next, after the first ages had pass'd by,
  The innocuous wing of every new born male
  By circumcision gain'd fresh purity.
But when the time of grace to man was will'd,
  Then innocence became of no avail,
  Unless the rite of baptism were fulfill'd.

Look now upon the face that chiefly Christ
Resembles; since the glory it imparts
May give thee power to see the face of Christ."
I look'd, and saw upon her such delight
Shower'd down, and borne among those holy hearts,
(Gifted with wings to fly around the height)
That all the sights which I had seen before
To raise such wonderment could not avail,
Nor such a likeness to the Godhead bore.
And now that Angel who erewhile descended,
Singing, as erst he did; "Hail, Mary, hail,"
In front of her his radiant wings extended.
Answer'd unto that heavenly hymn anon
The blessed choir, throughout this ample space,
So that each prospect more serenely shone.
"O Holy Father, who dost deign for me
To come below from that delightful place,
In which thou sittest everlastingly,
Who is that Angel, whom such joys inspire,
The eyes beholding of our heavenly queen;
Enamour'd so, that he appears on fire?"
Him I again thus question'd, upon whom
Mary her beauty was reflecting, e'en
As doth the Sun the morning star illume.

" Delight and confidence," he answer'd me,
Great as angelic spirits may attain,
Exist in him ;—so Heaven hath will'd it be :
For he it was who with the tidings came
To Mary, when the Son of God did deign
To take upon himself our mortal frame.
But as I go conversing on the way,
Lift up thine eyes ; and, casting them around,
The nobles of this pious realm survey.
Those two, who on their thrones above repose—
Most blest, since nearest to Augusta found—
Are roots, as 't were, of this celestial Rose.
He who is sitting near, upon the left,
Is that great sire, through whose temerity
Mankind were of such happiness bereft :
Upon the right that ancient priest behold
Of holy Church, to whom the double key
Of this bright flower by Christ was given of old.
Beside him sitteth he, who, ere he died,
Was witness unto all her long distress
Who through the lance and nails became a bride.
On the other side, the leader may be scann'd
Of those who wander'd in the wilderness—
A most perverse, ingrate, and fickle band.

Opposite Peter, lo, is seated Anna;—
So joyous to behold her daughter, she
Moves not her eye, the while she sings 'Hosanna.'
And opposite the mighty sire of men,
Sits Lucia, whom thy Lady sent to thee,
When o'er the dangerous brink was sunk thy ken.
But since the allotted vision soon must cease,
Pause we—e'en like a skilful tailor, who
Will cut his coat according to the piece.
Tow'rds the First Love do thou direct thine eyes,
That of His glory thou may'st snatch a view;
As far as given to mortal faculties.
But truly, lest, the while thy wings are strain'd,
Thinking to make advance, thou retrograde,
Behoves thee that by prayer be grace obtain'd—
Grace at her hands who can such gift impart;
And my request do thou so warmly aid,
That with thy lips accordant be thy heart."
This holy supplication then he made.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXXIII.

ARGUMENT.

St. Bernard invokes the Virgin Mary in behalf of Dante's desire to see our Saviour. Favoured with the beatific vision, he describes the Trinity. Christ once beheld, he undergoes such a change, that his own will gives place to the will of God.

PARADISO.

CANTO XXXIII.

"O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son!
Humblest, yet most exalted of our race,
Forecast of counsel in the Eternal One,—
Man's nature thou didst raise to such high station,
That He who made it thought it no disgrace
To vail His glory in His own creation.
Within thy womb renew'd its ancient power
That love, beneath whose vivifying glow
Put forth its buds in peace this blessed flower.
Here unto us a mid-day torch thou art
Of Charity; and unto men below
The living streams of Hope thou dost impart.

Lady, so great art thou, and such thy might,
That whoso grace desires, and asks not thee,
Desire indulges, ere equipp'd for flight.
Thy kindness succoureth not him alone
Who asks thy aid; but oft spontaneously
Runs in advance, and is, unask'd for, shown.
In thee dwells Mercy—Pity dwells in thee—
In thee Munificence—in thee abounds
Whate'er of Goodness may in creature be.
Now he, who from the nethermost abyss
Of all the world, hath in their several rounds
Beheld the spirits, or of woe or bliss,
A suppliant, asks thee, through the ministration
Of heavenly grace, to lift his eyes above,
That he may see the height of his salvation:
And I, who for that glorious sight die ne'er
Burn with more ardour than for him I prove,
Urge all my prayers; (and may they reach thine ear)
That by thy prayers thou would'st dispel each cloud
Of the mortality that dims his brow;
So may the Deity his face unshroud.
And I again implore thee, glorious Queen,
Who canst thy will perform, that henceforth thou
Would'st his affections guard—such vision seen:

Aid him each earth-born impulse to withstand;—
  See Beatrice, and see what numerous crowd
  Of saints assist my vows with clasped hand."
Those eyes, so loved of God, and so revered,
  Fix'd on the suppliant orator, now show'd
  How fervent prayers are in her sight endear'd.
Then to the Light eternal were they raised,—
  On which no creature, though with sight endued
  Of sharpest ken, so clearly ever gazed:
And I, who to the end of my desires
  Was now approaching, as was meet I should,
  Quench'd in my soul my long consuming fires.
Bernard made signal to me with a smile
  To look above; but of myself had I
  Anticipated his desire the while:
For now my vision, livelier than before,
  Within the beam of perfect Purity
  Was entering by degrees still more and more.
From this time forth my high empassion'd sight
  Was far too lofty for our mortal strains;
  And memory fails to take so vast a flight.
Like him who in a dream some object sees;
  And when the dream hath pass'd away, retains
  The impression, though impair'd its images;

E'en so am I; who, though have sunk to nought
The sights I saw entranced, yet in my mind
Feel all the sweetness that the vision wrought.
Before the sun the snow thus melts away;—
Thus, at the impulse of a gentle wind,
Were swept the traces of the Sybil's lay.
O Sovran Light! who dost exalt thee high
Above all thoughts that mortals may conceive,
Recal thy semblance to my mental eye;
And let my tongue record the wondrous story,
That I to nations yet unborn may leave
One spark at least of thy surpassing glory:
So, recollection aiding memory,
And this my verse, resounding forth thy praise,
Shall loftier thoughts be entertain'd of Thee.
I deem the fervour of the living ray
Would have o'erwhelm'd my senses in amaze,
Had I shrunk back, and turn'd mine eyes away:
But bolder, I remember, I became,
Till by degrees my eyes endured the sight,
And reach'd the utmost splendour of the flame.
O plenteous Grace—whence I presumed to cast
A stedfast gaze upon the Eternal Light,
Until the vision, now complete, was past!

Within its depth I saw that by the chains
Of love, in one sole volume was combined
Whate'er the universal world contains;—
Substance, and accident—their varied shows,
In such a manner altogether join'd,
That as One Light, the whole I speak of glows.
The form entire I saw, as I believe,
Of the whole group;—since, as I speak, do I
A greater fulness of delight receive.
Deeper oblivion now one moment made
In me, than all the centuries gone by
Have of the enterprize when Argo's shade
Astonish'd Neptune:—rivetted and bent
So wholly was my mind upon that Light;
And ever kindling to fresh wonderment.
Such one becomes, admiring that blest Ray,
That, whatsoever else allure the sight,
Impossible it is to turn away;
Because all objects beautiful and rare
Are centred in it;—all, defective found
Without it, are in full perfection there.—
Henceforth my accents will be more comprest
(So scant is memory) than is the sound
By infant utter'd at the mother's breast.

Not, that the living Light I look'd on, wore
Multiform aspects;—constant in the same,
And still remaining what it was before;—
But that mine eyes, which vigour gain'd, as on
That single Object fix'd was their deep aim,
E'en as I changed, were also changed anon.
Within that Essence, placid and profound,
Three Circles I beheld—of triple hue,
Though of an equal measurement around:—
The One the reflex of the other, e'en
As Iris of herself; and from the Two
Equally spread, the Third like fire was seen.
Oh! how are words unable to express
My least perception of the Forms I view'd!
And even this how infinitely less!
O Light Eternal! in Thyself alone
Contain'd, and by Thee only understood;—
Unto Thyself most lovely, as best known!
That second Circle,—gazed upon by me
Awhile, and, like to a reflected light,—
Appearing to derive its form from Thee,—
Was pictured inwardly, methought, in hue
The same wherewith is our own image dight;
Wherefore on it I wholly bent my view.

Geometrician, searching eagerly
  To square the circle, seeks and seeks in vain
  A principle that may his wants supply ;—
Such was my state, when that new sight I saw,—
  Longing to know how could the One contain
  The Other, and by what mysterious law.
But vainly mine own wings to this aspired ;
  When struck my mind such splendour from above,
  It straight accomplish'd all I had desired.
The glorious Vision here my powers o'ercame ;—
  But now my will was wholly sway'd by Love—
  (As turns a wheel on every side the same)
Love—at whose word the sun and planets move.

NOTES.

NOTES.

CANTO I.

3. ——————*In that sphere of heaven*

"CAUGHT up into Paradise, the third heaven," like St. Paul, Dante heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 *Cor.* xii. 4.) See line 73, and note. "If it were given to any of us to see Paradise, or the third heaven, (as it was to St. Paul,) could it be, that ever we should love any thing but Christ, or follow any guide but the Spirit, or desire any thing but heaven?"—*Jeremy Taylor, Of the Spirit of Grace.* "The 'unspeakable words,' which he heard there, and 'which it was not possible for man to utter,' might furnish another truth, if any were wanting, of the indescribable happiness of that place."—*Dr. Edward Burton. Works,* vol. i. Serm. 6.

9. *It cannot by the memory be pursued.*

"One may say of such meditations—as St. Paul speaks of those glorious things which he saw when he was rapt into the third heavens—they are neither lawful nor possible, to be uttered... because, that the affections being so intensely employed,—invention, memory, and the intellectual actings of the soul during that time do almost cease...Therefore, those meditations that are fullest of devotion cannot be remembered...or fully set down; for the soul is

never so free, nor may be, before others, as with God alone."—*A Method and Instructions for the Art of Divine Meditation, by Thomas White.* 1672. See note, canto xxxiii. 142.

13. *Make me such vessel of thy might, O thou,*

That Apollo is here invoked to the aid of the poet, as a Minister of heavenly grace, is evident from the text, where the words of St. Paul are adopted; "Make me such vessel of thy might;" and also from line 22, where he is called a "divine power." "Chaucer has imitated this invocation very closely at the beginning of the third book of Fame."—*Cary.*

20. *As when the daring Marsyas thou of old.*

The Satyr Marsyas, having defied the musical powers of Apollo, was vanquished by him, and flayed alive for his audacity.

36. *May other bard response from Cyrrha claim.*

Cyrrha was a city devoted to Apollo, at the foot of Parnassus, and here used as synonymous with it.

38. *The lantern of our world.*

The Sun:—"Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths."—*Psalm* cxix. The Sun is said to rise through various openings, because the point, or sign of the zodiac, from which he emerges, varies with the seasons. The opening here spoken of is that when the sun rises in Aries, conjoin'd with Venus, the "happier star" of the text—viz. in the spring; when "the mundane wax," *i.e.* the earth, is best suited to receive the impression of his beams. At this time the horizon, the zodiac, the equator, and the equinoctial colure join, intersecting each other, and form three crosses.—The poet says it was morning at

this time in Paradise, and night on earth. The meaning is, that though to the natural man all is dark and gloomy—to him who directs his eyes to the Sun of righteousness, God vouchsafes a manifestation of his glory.

49. *As from the first proceeds the second ray.*

i.e. The ray of reflection, generated by that of incidence, turns back, like the pilgrim, after he has attained the object of his journey. "These rays signify the grace of God, which, reflected from the eyes of Beatrice, and ascending to those of Dante, *i.e.* to his intellect, endue him with superhuman intelligence."—*Ottimo Commento.*

55. *Much is accorded in that holy place.*

i.e. Our faculties are far more perfect in the terrestrial Paradise, where Dante was, than on earth; (see *Purg.* xxv. 84,) and Paradise is the destination, as it was the birth-place, of the human soul.

65. *Upon the eternal wheels.*

i.e. The eternal and ever circling spheres of Heaven.

68. *As Glaucus, tasting of the herb,*

Glaucus is fabled to have been a fisherman, who seeing the fish he had caught, leap back into the sea, eat of the grass whereon they had lain, and became a marine Deity.

73. *Whether in Spirit only I was there,*
Illumed by thee, O Love.

St. Paul, speaking of his being caught up into the third heaven, says—"Whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the

body, I cannot tell." (2 *Cor.* xii. 2.) "Love is the leading passion of the soul: all the rest follow the measure and motion of it, as the lower heavens are said to be wheeled about with the first."—*Abp. Leighton, Serm.* vii. Of the Ptolemean system, see note, canto ii. 112. "He appeals to the Holy Spirit as to a true witness."—*Vellutello.*

76. *What-time the wheel thou mov'st eternally.*

The heavens, here described as a wheel, are said to be kept in motion by the love of God, which eternally attracts them to himself. And this desire, wherewith "the whole creation groaneth," is explained in the Convito, where Dante, speaking of the primum mobile, says: "Il quale per lo suo ferventissimo appetito d'essere congiunto col divinissimo cielo e quieto, in quello se risolve con tanto desiderio, che la sua velocità e quasi incomprehensibile." This is the doctrine of Plato. "The heavens are ever moving in search of the soul of the world, which is not in any one place, but scattered throughout all—which soul of the world is no other than God." "Nothing may be infinitely desired but that Good which is indeed infinite....No good is infinite but only God: therefore He is our felicity and our bliss. Moreover, desire tendeth unto union with that it desireth. If then in Him we be blessed, it is by force of participation and conjunction with Him....Then are we happy, therefore, when fully we enjoy God as an object wherein the powers of our souls are satisfied even with everlasting delight; so that although we be men, yet by being to God united, we live as it were the life of God."—*Hooker, Ecc. Pol.* i. 11. See note iv. 127. The "sweet harmony" of the spheres, here spoken of, is imitated by Milton.

> "And in their motions harmony divine,
> So smooths her charming tones, that God's own ear
> Listens delighted." *Par. Lost*, v. 625.

This is the "novel sound" heard by Dante, (line 82;) when exalted towards the moon, he beheld the light of the sun greatly increased.

99. *How through these lighter bodies I ascend.*

The poet is at a loss to understand how he is able to ascend through the spheres of air and fire, both comparatively lighter than his body. Beatrice proceeds to explain that every created thing has its peculiar object, according to the law of nature; and thus, as it is natural for fire to ascend, and water to descend, so is it natural for man, when not impeded by sin, to contemplate the heavens and approach God, in whose image he was made. "And morally this second doubt of Dante is, how he a mortal could with his intellect attain a knowledge of divine and eternal things."—*Vellutello.* Boethius is here quoted by the commentators:

"Tu cuncta superno
Ducis ab exemplo, pulcrum pulcherrimus ipse
Mundum mente gerens, similique in imagine formans."

123. *In which the heaven of greater speed doth roll.*

The empyrean, or seat of God. (See note to ii. 112.) "To this heaven," says Dante, "our desires are naturally inclined, according to the law spoken of line 103." Thus *Milton,* (*Par. Lost,* Book v. 469.)

"One Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to Him return;
If not depraved from good."

127. *'Tis true, that oft, as from the artist's hand.*

"Nam neque chorda sonum reddit quem vult manus et mens;
Poscentique gravem persæpe remittit acutum:
Nec semper feriet quodcunque minabitur arcus."
Horace, Art. Poet. 348.

CANTO II.

1. *O ye who fain would listen to my song.*

" Throughout the celestial spheres, so remote from us, and from our senses, he (Dante) appears to have run not with the intellect only, but, treading them really with his feet, to have beheld them with his very eyes; and on his return below, to have brought accurate intelligence respecting them. Whoso disbelieves this, let him read, among so many passages which may prove it, the second canto of the Paradiso."—*Guarini: Il Farnatico Savio. Tasso,* Quarto Edit. vol. xii. p. 339. The poet compares himself to one meditating a voyage, as in the opening of the Purgatorio, " The light bark of my genius hoists her sail." Continuing the metaphor, and assuming a ship for his genius, as more fitted for the deep ocean he is about to enter, he warns those who would follow him in his dangerous voyage, not to make the attempt, unless they have betimes accustomed themselves to heavenly contemplation.

7. *I am the first this voyage to essay.*

" Avia Pieridum perago loca nullius ante
Trita solo." *Lucretius,* i. 925.

" Juvat ire jugis quà nulla priorum
Castaliam molli divertitur orbita clivo."
Virgil, Georg, iii. 292.

Thus Milton,—*Par. Lost,* i. 16.

" Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme."

9. *And new-born Muses do the Bears display.*

" E nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse."

The translation leaves it doubtful, as does the Italian, whether the Ursa major and minor, (here used for any glorious constella-

tion,) point out new Muses, or whether new Muses point to the constellation. Another question results from the readings, "nuove" and "nove," viz. whether new Muses, or the nine Muses are intended. The latter, however, having been already invoked in the Purgatorio, Biagioli explains the passage by a reference to Tasso: "Nuove Muse, non quelle che di caduchi allori circondano la fronte in Elicona, ma altre, divine, eterne." Thus, Minerva, or celestial Wisdom, inspires him:—Apollo, the minister of grace (see note to canto i. 13) is his guide; and a glorious constellation directs him upwards to the abode of the heavenly Muses, such as never visited man. Thus Milton, (*Par. Lost.* vii. 5) invokes Urania as a being superior to the Muses:

> "For thou
> Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
> Of old Olympus dwell'st; but, heavenly born,
> Before the hills appeared or fountain flowed,
> Thou with Eternal Wisdom didst converse.
> * * * * * Upled by thee
> Into the heaven of heavens I have presumed,
> (An earthly guest) and drawn empyreal air."

10. *Ye other few, who have look'd up on high.*

"O beati quelli pochi che seggono a quella mensa ove il pane degli Angeli si mangea! E miseri quelli che colle pecore hanno commune cibo."—*Dante, Convito.* "Happy are they who arise early in the morning of their youth; for the day of life is very short, and the art of Christianity long and difficult."—*Archbishop Leighton.*

16. *Those glorious ones who drove of yore their prow.*

The Argonauts.—After taming bulls who breathed fire from their nostrils, Jason ploughed the land with them, and sowed it with serpents' teeth, whence sprang men.

19. *The innate thirst, which nought may e'er allay.*

This is the natural desire mentioned before, (canto i, 109,) and in the *Purg*, (xxi. 1.)

> The natural thirst, which ne'er can be allay'd,
> Save by the water from that hallowed fount
> For which the woman of Samaria prayed."

"There is in all things an appetite or desire, whereby they incline to something which they may be....All things in the world are said, in some sort, to seek the highest, and to covet more or less the participation of God himself."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol. Bk.* 1. "Certain it is, that nothing in our present state affords the means of satisfying this intellectual appetite, this hunger and thirst after things spiritual and eternal, which is perpetually craving what we find it is impossible to obtain."—*Bp. Van Mildert. Works*, vol. v. p. 486.

25. *Were to an elevated region brought.*

The moon—called (line 34) "the eternal pearl," and (line 30) "the first star," as being the first to which Dante ascends. The idea which Dante has expanded in his Paradiso is contained in a few lines of Claudian's 3rd Consul-Honorii, beginning,

> "Liquido signavit tramite nubes,
> Ingrediturque globum lunæ."

37. *If I were in the body.*

i.e. "If in the body I saw so much, (see i. 73) it is the greater encouragement to others to make the attempt."

51. *Which cause on earth the fabling tales of Cain.*

See *Inf.* xx. 125, and note. Dante attributes the spots in the moon to a supposed rarity in certain parts;—Beatrice to the degree in which the Angels who direct the stars partake of the divine splendour. See line 143. "Milton, in imitation of this passage, introduces the Angel arguing with Adam respecting the causes of the spots in the moon."—*Cary.* With equal improbability he describes them in another part as "unpurged vapours not yet into her substance turned."—(*Par. Lost,* v. 420.) "The most probable opinion is, that they are her seas and waters."

71. *Their source to formal principles.*

A scholastic term, meaning essential sources or causes, *i.e.* the Angels; whence Milton calls them "essential powers."—*Par. Lost,* v. 840. The sense is this: "According to your argument, the various influences and properties of the stars would proceed from one source, contrary to the rule of Aristotle; which cannot be. Therefore they must be produced by different degrees of glory in the presiding Angels."

112. *Beneath the heaven where peace eternal lives.*

i.e. "Within the empyrean, where the spirits enjoy eternal peace in the contemplation of God"—*Lombardi.* Within the empyrean is the primum mobile, or ninth heaven, which imparts motion to the various lower heavens. "The heaven that follows" (line 115) is that of the fixed stars, or eighth heaven, which also communicates its motion to "the essences," or heavens within it, called (line 121) "organs of the universe." These circles are said to impart to those within them the influence originally received from the first great Cause. To understand, however, this and many other passages in the Paradiso, it may be well to describe

the nine heavens or spheres, with their angelic Intelligences according to the Ptolemaic system followed by Dante—"God's own eternity is the hand which leadeth Angels in the course of their perpetuity; their perpetuity the hand that draweth out celestial motion, the line of which motion and the thread of time are spun together."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol.* B. v. ch. 69. To Keble's edition is appended the following note:—"This favours an opinion not uncommon among the Fathers and Schoolmen, of a correspondence between the intellectual and material heavens, in such sort that the nine spheres, of which the latter, according to the Ptolemaic system was composed, answered to, and were influenced respectively by, the nine orders of the celestial Hierarchy, as expounded in the books ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite. This double scheme (or συστοιχια) stands as follows:—

In the invisible heavens.		*In the material heavens.*
The Seraphim	actuated	The Primum Mobile.
The Cherubim		The Sphere of fixed Stars.
The Thrones		That of Saturn.
The Dominations		—— of Jupiter.
The Virtues		—— of Mars.
The Powers		—— of the Sun.
The Principalities		—— of Venus.
The Archangels		—— of Mercury.
The Angels		—— of the Moon.

Dante has several allusions to this opinion. See *Parad.* canto viii. terz 12, 13; xxix. 15; and xxviii. throughout."

130. *And that same heaven with lustrous planets dight.*

i.e. The same described (line 115)—the heaven of the fixed stars. The "mind profound," signifies its directing Angel.

143. *Sway'd by the joyous nature.*

i.e. "Of the moving Intelligence or Angel."—*Lombardi.*

CANTO III.

1. *That Sun which erst inflamed my breast with love.*

Beatrice is the sun here spoken of. She had just been explaining to Dante the cause of the spots in the Moon.

7. *But lo! a vision my intention cross'd.*

The " vision " consists of light and shadowy figures seen in the moon. These, on nearer inspection, prove to be the spirits of nuns, who, having been constrained to marry, had not returned to their convents when it was in their power. Through this defect they are not allowed to mount higher than the moon, which is an emblem of their inconstancy. The three similes by which they are introduced are extremely Dantesque and curious.

12. *Not darken'd to the observer doth appear.*

" Because if the water is very deep, it makes a mirror, and one sees the image clearly expressed, and not weak and faint, as the poet describes it."—*Venturi.*

18. *To that which erst Narcissus' soul impell'd.*

Narcissus, seeing the reflection of himself in a fountain, supposed it was another person:—Dante fell into the opposite error, mistaking real objects for imaginary.

49. *But thou wilt know Piccarda.*

Piccarda was sister of the two Donati, Corso and Forese.—The

latter thus speaks of her in the Purgatorio, (xxiv. 10, where see note.)

> "My sister, good and beautiful—which most
> I know not—triumphs in Olympus' height."

She became a nun in the convent of St. Clara, whence she was forcibly carried by her brother Corso, and married against her will, as alluded to by her, (line 106.) The "lowest sphere" (line 51) is that of the moon.

86. *Whither all creatures tend—both those that He.*

A distinction is here drawn between those creatures made immediately by God, and those born in the course of nature by successive generation.

91. *But as when sated with one sort of meat.*

Dante's curiosity having been satisfied on one question, viz. whether the inhabitants of the moon indulged in higher aspirations, (line 64) he now wishes to learn "what thread she had not spun to its full end," *i.e.* what religious vow she had failed to perform.

98. *Have to a loftier heaven exalted Her.*

"St. Clara d'Assissi, founder of the convent under the rule of St. Francis."—*Volpi.*

108. *God knows the life I afterwards pursued.*

"It is difficult to determine the sense of these words. One is led to suppose that marriage had the effect of alienating her from the veil of her heart."—*Biagioli.* A story is told of her defeating

the design of her husband by invoking upon herself a loathsome disease, and dying of the leprosy; but such resolution would surely have entitled her to a higher station.

117. *The sacred veil, which there she cherish'd still.*

"Dante calls 'veil of the heart' the religious affection of a woman who, being married against her will, never ceases to nourish the desire of being a nun."—*Volpi.*

118. *Great Constance' light is this.*

"Constance, Daughter of Roger I., king of Apulia, became a nun in Palermo. Being forced from the convent, she was given in marriage to the Emperor Henry VI., son of Frederick Barbarossa, and by him became mother of Frederick II."—*Volpi.* Henry VI. is styled (line 119) the "second blast of Swabia;" Frederick II. "the third and last." (line 120.)

123. *As through deep water sinks some heavy thing.*

Come per acqua cupa cosa greve

The very sound of this verse speaks. With it may be compared Byron's "Sullen it plunged and slowly sank."—(*Lara;*) also "They sank unto the bottom as a stone...they sank as lead in the mighty waters."—(*Exod.* xv. 5, 10.)

CANTO IV.

4. *So might a lamb between the cravings stand.*

Tigris ut auditis diversa valle duorum
Extimulata fame mugitibus armentorum
Nescit utro potius ruat, et nunc ardet utroque;
Sic dubius Perseus, dextrâ lævâne feratur.
Ovid, Met. v.

13. *And e'en as Daniel did of old.*

As Daniel explained Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and thereby appeased his wrath against the Magi, so Beatrice removed the doubts of Dante.

19. *You argue: "If a righteous will remain.*

This "righteous will" means the intention of the Nuns to fulfil their vows. Piccarda and Constance, mentioned in the last canto, are here alluded to.

23. *Because men's souls, as erewhile Plato taught.*

"Plato taught that our souls were created before our bodies, and distributed among the stars, whither they return'd, after the union with the body was dissolved; and remained there a shorter or longer time, according to their merits or demerits on earth."—*Lombardi.*

27. *The bitterest, shall my answer first be made.*

The answer to the first question commences line 67. In reply to the second, Beatrice here shows that Plato's philosophy is not

applicable to heaven; and that angels and spirits are said, humanly speaking, to have different mansions assigned them, merely to show their different degrees of glory.

37. *Here they display'd themselves.*

Viz. "Piccarda and Constance:—not that this lunar sphere is chosen by them, but to signify that as it is the lowest and furthest from God, they enjoy but a small degree of glory among the blessed saints."—*Costa.* Beatrice proceeds to explain that a higher and a lower heaven are mentioned only for the purpose of conveying an idea of the different degrees of glory enjoyed in heaven. "The sacred poets were under the necessity of speaking of God in a manner adapted to human conceptions, and of attributing to him the actions, the passions, and the faculties of man...in conformity with the weakness of the human understanding."—*Louth. Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,* vol. i. p. 359. So also in his notes on Isaiah, (cap. i. 24) "We have no idea of the natural attributes of God, of his manner of existence, of his manner of acting; when therefore we would treat of these subjects, we find ourselves forced to express them by sensible images." In his mode of illustration, Dante imitates St. Paul.—"St. Paul likens the different degrees of glory which the blessed shall enjoy to the different degrees of splendour in the heavenly bodies, as 'one star differeth from another.'" (1 *Cor.* xv. 41.)—*Bp. Van Mildert.* Works, vol. vii. p. 497. "It is true, whilst our souls are confined to these bodies, they can have no distinct perception of things without the help of fancy, and those corporeal ideas, and as it were images of things, which being seated in the body, must necessarily die and perish with it."—*Bishop Bull. Serm.* iii. The allusion (line 48) is to the Archangel Raphael. (Tobit v. 4.)

55. *And haply what he really meant may be.*

i.e. "It may be, that Plato merely attributes an influence to the

heavenly spheres." According to this interpretation, Plato's meaning is the same with Dante's; who proceeds to say that this Platonic doctrine, taken literally, and not in the spiritual sense, formerly led the greater part of the world astray,—causing them to deify heroes, and pay idolatrous worship to the stars. "This Workman, whose Servitor Nature is, being in truth but only One, the Heathens imagining to be more, gave him in the sky the name of Jupiter...in the water the name of Neptune, &c....even so many guides of nature they dreamed of, as they saw there were heads of things natural in the world."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol.* i. 3.

67. *That heavenly justice should to mortal eye.*

The argument is, "Credo quia impossibile." "If the question related," continues Dante, "to other truths above human comprehension, I would merely exhort you to believe."—*Lombardi.*

75. *These souls no real violence sustain'd.*

i.e. They had not really suffered violence; for they might have returned to the "holy place," *i.e.* to the convent, (line 81.)

83. *Such as kept Laurence on the bars.*

"He bids Laurence renounce Christ, and prepares against the stubborn courage of that Deacon's breast, dreadful tortures; and when the first proves fruitless, he proceeds to fiercer. He tears and shreds his limbs with continued scourging; next he gives orders to broil them over the fire, so that, being stretched on the red hot bars, first on one side, then on the other, the torment might be the greater, and the punishment more protracted."—*Sermon of St. Leo. Oxford Tracts*, No. 75, p. 128.

97. *Yet from Piccarda mightest thou have heard.*

See last canto, line 117. *i.e.* "What Piccarda there related of Constance seems to contradict my account; but this arises from

not considering that there are two species of Wills—one, that gives way to expediency—another, that is absolute and unchangeable. Thus Constance might be said to retain in her heart an affection for the veil forcibly torn from her; but she did not encounter death rather than yield, or return to the convent when in her power." Of Alcmæon, (line 103) "facto pius et sceleratus eodem;" (*Ovid. Met.* ix. 409) see note *Purg.* xii. 49.

115. *Such was the current of that river blest.*

Beatrice, personifying Wisdom, is the stream whose eloquent current derived from God, "the fountain of all truth," laid to rest Dante's doubts. The passage is similar to that in the Inferno, (canto i. 80,) "Or sie tu quel Virgilio, e quella fonte, che spande di parlar si largo fiume."—The expression, "O Sovereign dearling," (line 118) is adopted from Spencer, (Hymn to Heavenly Beauty) as the nearest transcript of the original, "O Amanza del primo Amante."

124. *I see full well the mind can ne'er exist*
Content, unless illumed by that True Light.

"Still something is wanted on which the heart may securely repose—some better portion which cannot be taken away; which may be commensurate to the vast capacities of an immortal soul. This something is true religion—the love of God and the love of men....The reason why man grows sick of every object, and engages in such a multitude of pursuits, is, because he still retains the idea of his lost happiness, which not finding in himself, he seeks through the whole circle of external things, but always seeks without success, because indeed we cannot find it in ourselves, nor in the creatures, but in God alone."—*Bp. Jebb, Life and Letters,* vol. ii. p. 44.

127. *Therein it rests, like beast within its lair.*

"Therein,"—*i.e.* within divine truth. Our capability of arriving at truth, and knowing God, is inferred from our innate desire of knowledge. "Had we not this capability," says Dante, "our faculties would be bestowed in vain, which cannot be. It is the nature of man never to be satisfied with knowledge. Doubts spring up in succession, (line 130) and we are impelled upward from one to another in the endless pursuit of truth." "Is it probable that God should frame the hearts of all men desirous of that which no man may attain? It is an axiom of nature that desire cannot utterly be frustrate...and man's desire, being natural, would be frustrate, if there were not some further thing wherein it might rest at length contented."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol.* i. 11. (See note i. 76.)

139. *Then Beatrice, her eyes divinely bright.*

Beatrice has before been described as "sorridendo negli occhi santi," (canto iii. 24)—now, "con gli occhi pieni di faville d'amor;" and in the ensuing cantos, she is described with such glowing expressions, that in her face the Paradise of Dante has been deemed to exist;—an idea supported by the following passage in the Convito:—"Beatrice represents the divine Science, (*i.e.* Wisdom) illuminated with all the light of God. In her face are displayed the pleasures of Paradise; *i.e.* in her eyes, and in her smile." Hence Beatrice becomes a theme on which the poet descants in descriptions of endless variety and beauty, after the manner of the Scriptures.—"She is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty. ...She is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness....God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars: being compared unto light she is found before it."—*Wisdom*, vii. 25, &c.

CANTO V.

1. *If wrapt in Love's extatic flame, I glow.*

Alfieri explains this in an active sense, " S'io, t'infiammo;"—the author of the Ottimo Commento, Landino, and others, in a neuter, as adopted in this translation:—the " perfetto veder " that follows, seems to decide the question, as applicable to Beatrice and not to Dante. The prostration of the poet before the splendour of Beatrice was the concluding scene of the last canto.

11. *'Tis but some faint misapprehended trace.*

" It should be known that the primal Agent, *i.e.* God, paints his virtue upon some things by a direct ray, and upon others by a reflected splendour. Hence the divine Light beams direct upon the Intelligences, and from these is reflected upon other things."—*Convito.*

13. *Thou askest whether broken vows may be.*

See last canto, line 136.

19. *The greatest boon by the Creator given.*

Here commences the answer to the question asked by Dante, at the end of the last canto, as to the manner in which vows may be fulfilled:—" Man being endued," he says, " with Freewill; and this not necessarily swayed by expediency, but absolute, and under his control, when he has once sacrificed that will by a vow to God, such vow must strictly be fulfilled."

29. *Of this same treasure, so important deem'd.*

i.e. Freedom of will, spontaneously sacrificed to God, when we adopt His will instead of our own.

57. *Without the turning of the twofold keys.*

i.e. Without the authority of the Church, represented by the keys, said to be given by our Saviour to St. Peter,—"one of gold and the other of silver."—(*Purg.* ix. 118, where see note.)

64. *O mortals, offer not your vows in jest.*

"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it."—*Ecclesiastes* v. 4. (see also *Numbers*, xxx. 2.) Of Jephthah, see *Judges*, cap. xi.; and *Scripture Hist.* (p. 166) by the *Hon. and very Rev. Henry E. J. Howard, D.D., Dean of Lichfield.*

70. *Her beauty whence Iphigenia wept.*

The passage of Lucretius, (b. i. 85) which Dante had in view, describing the sacrifice, is too beautiful to be omitted :—

"Aulide quo pacto Triviäi virginis aram
Iphianassai turparunt sanguine fædè
Ductores Danaum, delecti, prima virorum.
Cui simul infula virgineos circumdata comptos
Ex utraque pari malarum parte profusa est,
Et mæstum simul ante aras adstare parentem
Sensit; et hunc propter ferrum celare ministros;
Aspectuque suo lacrymas effundere cives:
Muta metu terram genibus submissa petebat;
Nec miseræ prodesse in tali tempore quibat
Quod patrio princeps donârat nomine regem.
Nam sublata virûm manibus, tremibundaque, ad aras
Deducta est, non ut solenni more sacrorum
Perfecto, posset claro comitari Hymenæo;
Sed casta inceste nubendi tempore in ipso
Hostia consideret mactatu mæsta parentis,
Exitus ut classi felix, faustusque daretur.
Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum."

80. *Not beasts, devoid of sense.*

Thus in the Inferno, (xxvi. 119) " For not to live like brutes were ye designed," The part of heaven alluded to (line 86) is, according to Cesari, that in which God more peculiarly dwells.

91. *And as an arrow to the mark is driven.*

See a like simile canto ii. 23. The poet is now rapt to Mercury, the second kingdom, inhabited by spirits who were active in the pursuit of honour.

116. *The Thrones of the eternal triumph.*

i.e. The Angels celebrating the triumph of Christ. This light " which fills the expanse of heaven," is that of charity—as universal there as light itself.

126. *Which when thou smilest, more serenely shine.*

Thus translated upon conjecture, before I met with the reading " corruscan " of the Cod. Steward, adopted by Dionisi.

129. *Hid by another's ray from mortal eye.*

Mercury, says Dante in his Convito, is more veiled by the splendour of the sun, to which it is contiguous, than any other planet.

131. *That had been first to address me.*

The spirit is so animated by the charitable desire of gratifying Dante's wishes, as to become veiled in her own splendour. The simile that follows resembles that beautiful passage in the Purg. (xxx. 22) " Erewhile the eastern regions have I seen," &c.

CANTO VI.

1. *When Constantine had turn'd the Eagle back.*

"The poet, as a good Ghibelline, celebrates the glories of the imperial Eagle by the mouth of Justinian."—*Venturi.* "Constantine, in transferring the seat of empire from Rome to Byzantium, carried the eagle, the imperial ensign, from the west to the east. Æneas, on the contrary, had with better augury, moved along with the sun's course, when he passed from Troy to Italy. Constantinople was situated at the extreme of Europe, and on the borders of Asia, near those mountains in the neighbourhood of Troy, whence the first founders of Rome had emigrated."—*Cary.* (Mr. Cary's note, however just in itself, accords not with his translation, which following the common reading "che la seguio" makes Æneas follow the eagle, and not the eagle Æneas. The reading of the Cod. Bart. "ch'ella seguio" removes the objection.) The period mentioned, from the entrance of Constantine into Byzantium to the reign of Justinian, consists of 203 years; *i.e.* from 324 to 527. The Eagle is called the "Bird of God," as being the Ensign of that monarchy appointed to govern the world during the universal peace that existed at the time of our Saviour's birth.

10. *Cæsar I was—Justinian now am I.*

i.e. "The accidental honour I enjoyed on earth in being an Emperor ceased there; and in heaven I am simply Justinian." He remodelled the code of laws; as alluded to, line 13. He was a follower of the Eutychian heresy, and disbelieved in the human nature of Christ, till convinced by Pope Agapetus. By Belisarius, his general, the Goths were defeated, and Rome liberated.

28. *To thy first question have I made reply.*

See last canto, line 127. Having spoken of the Eagle, Justinian is led to mention the Guelfs and Ghibellines, the latter, who adopt it as a standard, and the former who oppose it.

36. *Young Pallas died, its sovereignty to found.*

Pallas, who was sent by his father Evander to assist Æneas, having been killed in the battle against Turnus, made way for Æneas; and thus Pallas is said, under divine Providence, to have been a founder of Rome. The three opposed to three (line 39) are the Horatii and Curiatii. From the success which attended the armies of the Roman Empire Dante infers its divine origin. See also *Inf.* ii. 13; &c.—The claim of Rome to universal monarchy is supported by him in his "De Monarchiâ" on the same grounds. The danger of such an argument applied to the religions that have prevailed in the world is well exposed by Bishop Van Mildert, vol. 5, Serm. 11. Success, he shows, can be only a certain evidence of Divine favour, when it is such as cannot rationally be accounted for as the work of mere human agents. Thus, comparing the establishment of Mahometanism with that of Christianity, and the means used by their respective founders, he observes, "Bring your Prophet to the same test that we apply to Jesus and his Apostles, and instantly the parallelism vanishes....The Arabian produced no voucher but the sword; and is it a strange thing that the sword should make proselytes?" Popery was founded also by the sword, or by (what is the same thing) the influence and authority of those in high places. The strides that Popery is now again making, under the same influence, are looked upon by many with apathy, on the grounds of the argument used by Gamaliel: "If this counsel," &c. (*Acts* v. 38, 39.) Gamaliel indeed rightly contended that a religion upheld by no such means, could not prevail, unless it was of God. But the fallacy of such argument applied

to a religion upheld by power and corruption is manifest, unless we are to expect that God will specially interfere in cases under our own control, and where we have experience for our guide. By our neglect in defending the Truth we tempt God to deprive us of its blessings. There is no reason why we should allow its holy cause to suffer, because we believe it must ultimately triumph. A trust in Providence is not to be justified, unless accompanied by the exertion of every human means.

49. *Down to the ground it brought the Arabian's pride.*

"Arabians," *i.e.* Carthaginians, so styled, "from their origin;" —or, a general term for the North-Africans, who are called Arabs to this day.

54. *Against the hill which thou a boy didst climb.*

The hill of Fæsulæ is situated above Florence, the birth-place of Dante. The old city of Fæsulæ was destroyed by Pompey for affording a retreat to Cataline and his followers. In the ensuing lines Dante alludes to the universal peace prevailing at the time of our Saviour's birth, and proceeds to mention the various places visited by Cæsar. "By the rivers, Dante comprehends all the countries acquired by Cæsar, under the standard of the Eagle, during five years."—*Ottimo Commento.* After passing the Rubicon, his victories were too rapid, Dante says, to describe. Durazzo, now Dyracchium, is a town in Illyricum.—From Pharsalia, after his defeat, Pompey fled to Larissa, and was slain in Egypt by Ptolemy, with whom he sought refuge, as alluded to by the mention of the Nile. Antandros is a city in Phrygia, whence Æneas set sail for Italy, and hence the Eagle is said to go back. Of Cæsar's supposed visit to Troy, as he pursued Pompey into Egypt across the Hellespont, see Lucan, (Phars. ix. 964.) He took Egypt from Ptolemy and gave it to Cleopatra:—defeated Juba, King of

Mauritania, who favoured Pompey's sons, and pursued them into the west, (*i.e.* to the borders of Spain) where they had re-collected their forces.

73. *Of what he did who next the ensign bore.*

Augustus Cæsar.—To escape him, Brutus and Cassius slew themselves. Near Modona, in Lombardy, Augustus defeated Anthony's troops. At Perugia, he took prisoner his brother Lucius. After the death of Anthony he occupied the whole of Egypt as far as the Red Sea.

84. *Throughout the mortal realm o'er which it reign'd.*

i.e. "The whole earth, in opposition to the immortal kingdom of heaven."—*Lombardi.* Dante derives glory to the Eagle, that the government of the world should have been entrusted to it at such a time as the crucifixion of our Saviour, and that in the hands of Tiberius it should have thus been an instrument of our redemption.

90. *To execute the vengeance of His ire.*

As the crucifixion avenged, or redeemed the sin of Adam, so was the crucifixion—*i.e.* the death of an innocent victim—avenged by the punishment of the Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus. (See next canto, line 20.)

94. *And when in time the Lombard tusk had gored.*

From Titus to Charlemagne is a wide leap. The latter is represented as an instrument in the hands of Providence to defend the Church, and as acting under the protection of the Eagle. He conquered Desiderius, King of the Lombards, who had possessed Italy above 200 years.

97. *Now may'st thou form an estimate of those.*

i.e. The Guelfs and Ghibellines, mentioned before—(line 31) the former supported by France in the person of Charles II. King of Apulia, under whose fleur de lis they arrayed themselves;—the latter by the Emperor, whose influence they endeavoured to turn to their private interests. Dante has been accused of being a violent Ghibelline; but he here shows his impartiality by inveighing equally against both factions. He calls the standard of the Emperor "a public one," (line 100) *i.e.*—that he reigns for the public good, and must not be expected to favour any party views whatever.

106. *This, let not a new Charles, with Guelphic aid.*

Charles II. King of Naples. "Let him remember, he says, that the Eagle has abased more formidable foes—that, as his father was an usurper, so he may pay the penalty; and that God will not for his sake reverse the immutable decrees of Justice, and prostrate the Eagle before the Lily, *i.e.* will not transfer the empire of the world from Rome to France."

112. *This little star with spirits good is rife.*

From this and the following stanza, it appears that Justinian and those with him had been debarred from ascending to a higher sphere, because they limited their aim in a great measure to the acquirement of earthly reputation.

121. *The living Justice with such even flow.*

See canto iii. line 70. The following simile signifies that the perfect harmony of heaven will not be interrupted by the variety of its mansions.

ALTA

128. *Shines out Romeo's pure and spotless light.*

Romeo was a poor man who, returning from a pilgrimage to St. James of Gallicia, was received into the house of Count Raymond Berenger, in Provence; and, being found a man of ability, was raised to places of trust. He refused to tell his name, or that of his country, and was hence called "Romeo," signifying a Pilgrim. He greatly increased the revenue of his patron by judicious and faithful management of his affairs, and enabled the Count to marry his four daughters to four Kings, viz. Louis IX. of France; Henry III. of England; Richard, Henry's brother, King of the Romans; and Charles, King of Naples, brother to Louis. The influence Romeo obtained excited the jealousy of the Provençal Barons, who succeeded in rendering his master suspicious. An account of his administration was required of him, which he rendered with the greatest punctuality, and showed the extent of his services. It is said that he refused the Count's solicitation to remain; and taking his mule, his staff, and his scrip, parted as poor as he came, and submitted to obtain a livelihood by mendicancy. His story excited the indignation of Dante, whose heart revolted at the sufferings of so faithful a servant, through the foolish credulity of his master. By the side of this short sketch of Romeo may be set the similar one of himself in canto xvii.: "Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta," &c.

CANTO VII.

2. *Who o'er the spirits of thy kingdoms blest.*

The spirits are in the original called fires, as glowing with the flame of charity. The flame which represents Justinian, assumes a twofold appearance, designating his love to God and his neighbour, as shown in his desire to instruct Dante.

21. *How vengeance just could meet just punishment.*

This refers to the last canto, (line 93) " vengeance for vengeance of the old offence." (See note to line 50.)

27. *Condemn'd himself, and with him all his race.*

This condemnation of a whole race for the crime of its first Parent is a mystery which it is not given to us in our present state to understand. It is enough for us to know that a way is opened whereby the condemnation may be turned to our infinite gain.

35. *This nature, as first made.*

" To detract from the primitive excellence of him who was made in the image of God, is virtually to detract from the perfections of Him in whose image he was made;—and to imagine the fault of the creature to have originated in the will of the Creator is virtually to transfer the guilt to Him. The knowledge of what man once was, and might have continued to be, teaches us that our own well-being and perfection depend upon our continual endeavour to conform ourselves to that image in which he was created. The necessity of man's redemption is grounded upon his fall. The

extent of that redemption corresponds with the extent of his corruptions."—*Bp. Van Mildert. Works,* vol. v. pp. 161. 167. "When the sinner fairly estimates the guilt of sin by the costly satisfaction which was required to atone for it, and the worth of his soul by the price which was paid for its redemption, and contrasts these with his own sottish inconsiderateness—when he reflects on the amazing love and pity of Christ, and on the cold and formal acknowledgments with which he has hitherto returned this infinite obligation—surely if he be not lost to sensibility...he will smite upon his breast, and cry out in the language of the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'"—*Wilberforce. Prac. View,* c. vii. s. 1.

47. *God was well pleased,—well pleased the Jews too were.*

"The death of Christ pleased God as affording a satisfaction for the offence of Adam:—it pleased the Jews as satisfying their rage; whereat earth gave signs of grief, heaven of joy, in opening for the redemption of man."—*Costa.*

50. *Whene'er 'tis said, a just revenge, &c.*

"The punishment of Christ by the Jews, although just as far as regarded the human nature assumed by him, and so, a righteous vengeance of sin, yet being unjust as it regarded the divine nature, was itself justly revenged on the Jews by the destruction of Jerusalem."—*Cary.*

56. *But wherefore our redemption to effect.*

This is the great stumbling block upon which man falls through pride, like his father Adam. As Adam could not understand why he was forbidden to eat of the tree, and therefore was disobedient; so man, unable to comprehend the mystery of godliness in the mode of our redemption, rejects the scheme altogether, or inquires

into it with the intellect alone, "not matured by the warm flame of love," (line 60.) He cleaves to his own understanding, instead of abandoning himself with childlike docility to the teaching of his heavenly Father. Dante has not only stated the difficulty, but solved it in the clearest manner; and Milton has followed him. See *Par. Lost*, B. iii. 294.

64. *The heavenly Goodness, that all envy spurns.*

"The Goodness of God, which reprobates all envy, burning with love in itself, displays its own beauties to its creatures."—*Ottimo Commento.* God is not only free from envy himself, but rejects and abhors all the feelings to which it gives rise. God is love, *i.e.* perfect charity, which admits not envy into its composition; but is anxious to impart to others its own perfections and happiness.—"He made the world, and all things in it, not to display his own glory and splendour, which, being infinite, cannot be increased; but solely in order to communicate to us his infinite goodness and love."—*Daniello.*

67. *What flows immediate from that heavenly Lamp.*

"Immediate, *i.e.* direct, without the intervention of secondary causes."—*Venturi.* (See line 122.)

73. *Greater the likeness, greater His delight.*

i.e. "The more the creature resembles God, the more it partakes of his brightness."—*Ottimo Commento.* "Quanto la cosa è piu divina, è piu di Dio simigliante."—*Dante. Convito.* "All things in the world are said, in some sort, to seek the highest, and to covet more or less the participation of God himself."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol.* i. 5. (See notes, canto i. 76, and iv. 127.)

76. *To benefit the human creature, all.*

i.e. All the prerogatives before mentioned, viz. Immortality, (line 68)—Freedom, (line 71)—and Likeness to God, (line 73.)

79. *'Tis sin alone his freedom takes away.*

Man was created in the likeness of God, with a soul not subject to base passions, but pure and innocent, free to look up and admire the excellence of his Creator. This was the pristine state of dignity enjoyed by man till the purity of his soul was marred by the intrusion of sin; when, instead of walking with God, and holding communion with Him, as with a friend, Adam hid himself, and conceived that sinful enmity towards his Father which has since constituted the degradation and misery of the human race.

97. *Man was unfit (his nature bounded so.)*

When he listened to the words of the devil, "Ye shall be like gods." (*Gen.* iii. 5.) Such pride was not to be redeemed by man. It was reserved for our Saviour to "humble himself unto the death of the cross," and for our sake "to make himself of no reputation." "If mankind had not been in a lost state there would have been no need of Christ's becoming man, or suffering death to redeem them; so unless it is clearly understood and felt that mankind are incompetent to justify themselves in the sight of God, the doctrine of justification through Christ's death cannot be sincerely or cordially received."—*Bishop Sumner. Apostolical Preaching. On the Corruption of human Nature.* "The light of nature is never able to find out a way of obtaining the reward of bliss, but by performing exactly the duties and works of righteousness. From salvation, therefore, and life, all flesh being excluded this way, behold how the wisdom of God hath revealed a way, mystical and supernatural."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol.* i. 11.

105. *Either, I say, by one, or by the twain.*

By the means either of Mercy, or of Justice, or of both. (See *Psalm* xxiv. 4.) God chose "the twofold way," (line 110) *i.e.* he vindicated his justice at the same time that he showed his mercy. Or the twofold way may be the pardon of sin for Christ's sake, and the spiritual quality or grace of justification infused into the soul.

114. *Hath been, or shall be, project so sublime.*

"Sublime" indeed was that "project," whose glorious consummation the Psalmist anticipated, when he exclaimed: "Mercy and Truth have met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other."—*Psalm* lxxxv. 10.

118. *And every other mode had wholly fail'd.*

> "Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
> And He that might the vantage best have took
> Found out the remedy."
>
> *Measure for Measure.* Act ii.

"It is certain that we cannot conceive any possible mode, except the revealed mode through the sacrifice of Christ, in which God could be both just and the justifier of sinners....The problem baffled all finite intelligence, because a divine person alone could mediate between God and man....The penalties due to a violated law have been discharged; and therefore if we believe in our surety, we are as free as though we had never transgressed."—*H. Melvill. Serm.* v. "The unbounded love of God for his creation, induced Him with patience to submit to a protracted trial of his own attributes of wisdom, justice, and benevolence; and cheerfully to make the only sacrifice which could reconcile Him with the world by vindicating His ways before all creatures, so that all doubt and

jealousy should be swallowed up in perfect knowledge, and in the spirit of truth and love....It is therefore apparent that God could only restore the world by means of an enormous sacrifice. And if that sacrifice was only so great as to leave any greater unmade, the doubts and imperfections of created ignorance would still raise up the idea that the spirit of God was self-love, and a lie, instead of being love and truth....Therefore it was necessary that the sacrifice should come out of the glory and perfection of the Godhead, in order to silence all blaspheming tongues for ever and ever. In this was manifested the love of God," &c.—*Nimrod,* vol. iv. pp. 264—229. " Upon a retrospect of this great subject in all its bearings, what a field is open for grateful contemplation! When we reflect upon the boundless compassion of God the Father in providing the means of our redemption—upon the wonderful condescension of God the Son in uniting his divine to our mortal nature, and, for our sakes, submitting to its bitter degradation and sufferings; and upon the all-sufficient aid imparted by God the Holy Ghost, to make us the children of God, and heirs of eternal life; are we not constrained to exclaim with the Psalmist, ' Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou so regardest him ? "—*Bp. Van Mildert. Works,* vol. 5, p. 373. " Here is then the wonderful counsel of the most high God :—the sacrifice that is appointed shall be so ordered, that God and Man shall be conjoined in one Person; that so as Man, he might become a sacrifice for sin; and as God, he might give a value to the sacrifice. And this is the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh....Here I find a way to get all my sins pardoned; whereas, without this, all the world cannot contrive a satisfaction for me."—*Sir M. Hale. Contemplations. Of the Knowledge of Christ crucified.*

122. *A former passage will I now explain.*

See line 67, and note.

130. *The Angels, Brother, and the sphere serene.*

The doctrine of Dante according to the opinion of those times is, that the Angels, the heavens, and the soul of man being created immediately by God, are eternal; but that the elements, plants, beasts, &c., created by the stars, or by the Angels in them, *i.e.* by secondary causes, are perishable. This distinction may appear fanciful, as also the idea of the heavens being imperishable, since we are told, "the heavens shall pass away;" but the heavens spoken of in this text are merely the atmosphere of the earth; (see Josh. Mede, in loco) whereas the heavens of Dante are the heavenly bodies of whose destiny we know little. They may wax old, and undergo change, and yet be imperishable. Dante's idea is grounded, Lombardi says, on a passage in Ecclesiastes, "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever." (cap. iii. 14.)

143. ——————— *and bids us love Himself.*

"Fecisti nos, Domine ad te, et irrequietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te."—*St. Augustin.* (See *Purg.* xvi. 85, &c.)

145. *Hence for your resurrection may ye ground.*

i.e. Man having been created immediately by God, must therefore live for ever—his apparent death being merely temporary. In reply to Venturi, who calls this "a lame argument for the resurrection," Cesari observes, "that Dante, so far from maintaining an argument ex cathedra, is merely making a passing remark."

CANTO VIII.

9. *And said he rested on fair Dido's breast.*

" Hæc pectore toto
Hæret, et interdum gremio fovet." *Æn.* i. 717.

13. *I mark'd not when within that orb divine.*

" There is no circumstance in the whole compass of the Divina Commedia more exquisitely imagined than the unfelt swiftness with which Dante and Beatrice, by the mere act of volition, are transported from planet to planet in the Paradiso; nor is the evidence of their arrival at each new stage, in the increased loveliness of the lady to the eyes of the poet, less delicately conceived."—*James Montgomery.*

37. *Ye who intelligent, the third heaven move.*

This is the first verse of one of the canzone of Dante in his Convito.—" Intelligent," *i.e.* " by your intelligence." The third heaven is that of Venus.

40. *Then soon as were mine eyes in reverence bent.*

i.e. " Without speaking—and merely by a look, Dante asked permission of Beatrice to address the Spirit; and Beatrice in like manner showed her acquiescence."—*Lombardi.*

49. *Thus beautified it said: " On earth below.*

" The spirit who speaks is Charles Martel, eldest son of Charles II. King of Naples. During the life time of his father, Charles

Martel was crowned King of Hungary, (being the son of Maria of Hungary, sister of Ladislaus, King of Hungary, who died in 1290 without heirs,) and had he survived his father, would have inherited his possessions; but on his dying before him, his brother Robert usurped the throne to the exclusion of Charles' sons. Dante here makes a prophetic allusion to the bad government of Charles' sons."—*Lombardi.*

55. *Thy love to me was worthily display'd.*

"I do not find that any one mentions this friendship of our poet with King Charles Martel. Perhaps he contracted the friendship on occasion of his having been twice ambassador at Naples to the King his father, or while Charles Martel remained at Florence, expecting during three weeks the return of his father."—*Lombardi.*

60. *Me for her sovereign was prepared to own.*

i.e. Provence was prepared to receive me, as my father's heir, had I survived him. "The horn of Ausonia" (line 61) means the kingdom of Naples, so called as being the extremity or foot of Italy, with which Ausonia is synonymous.

67. *And beauteous Sicily, with smoke o'ercast.*

i.e. "Sicily, darkened by the fumes of Ætna, would have now been governed by my descendants had I lived longer, and so prevented the misrule which has ensued." In 1291, Charles Martel married Clemenza, a daughter of Rodolph of Austria, by whom he had one son, Charles. These are the Rodolph and the Charles spoken of line 72; *i.e.* the father-in-law and son of Charles Martel.

75. *'Death, death' throughout Palermo to be heard.*

"In Palermo took place the famous Sicilian vespers, when all the French in Sicily were put to death; in consequence of which Peter of Arragon obtained the government of the island, to the exclusion of the King of Anjou."—*Lombardi.* While Robert, the brother of Charles Martel, was in Catalonia as hostage for his father during seven years, he contracted friendship with many poor Catalonians. These he brought into Italy, and promoted to offices of state. "If," says Charles Martel, "my brother Robert foresaw how ill government alienates the hearts of a subject people, he would abandon these hungry and greedy paupers of Catalonia, whom he has raised to civil offices, but who traffic in justice,—lest the people should be roused to vengeance."—*Costa.*

93. *Namely, how bitter seed from sweet may sprout.*

This refers to line 82, where it was said that Robert, King of Naples, was degenerate: such degeneracy exciting Dante's surprise, as contrary to the rule "Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis." Charles Martel says (line 96) that he will explain the cause. (See next note.)

97. *The Good Supreme, who motion doth dispense.*

The argument, here begun, and continued to the end of the canto, is as follows:—"Whatever ends are desirable for the well-being of man, are effected by God's providence through the medium of the heavenly bodies and the Intelligences which direct them; and this providential influence, which we call nature, is unerring in its functions. But society, which requires a variety of talents, could not exist, if all were alike; nor is it expedient that all should possess, as by inheritance, the same temper and talents as their parents. Nature, therefore, interferes to prevent this;

and hence the variety we see in the same family;—a variety sadly lost sight of by parents in choosing professions for their children. The "natures" (line 101) refer to mankind:—*i.e.* God not only originates the necessary variety in human dispositions and talents, but provides for their continuance. The "master" (line 120) is Aristotle.

136. *What was behind thee, now before thee lies.*

i.e. "I have now fulfilled my promise, (line 96) and placed the truth clearly before you."

145. *But him most suited unto war, ye teach.*

"Before fixing on a point so very important, I would have you consult the nature of the boy himself. I do not mean by this that you should ask his opinion, because at so early an age a wellbred child naturally takes up what is suggested to him by his parents; but I think you should consider with as much impartiality as a parent can, his temper, disposition, and qualities of mind. It is not enough that you think there is an opening for him in one profession rather than another; for it were better to sacrifice the fairest prospects of that kind than put a boy into a line of life for which he is not calculated....So years might wear away, and at last the youth starts off from his profession and becomes an adventurer too late in life, and with the disadvantage, perhaps, of offended friends, and advanced age standing in the way of his future prospects."—*Walter Scott. Life*, vol. iv. p. 379.

CANTO IX.

1. *As soon as thy loved sire, Clemenza fair.*

"Dante here directs his speech, by way of apostrophe, to Clemenza the daughter of Charles Martel, wife of Ludovico X. King of France, alive when Dante wrote."—*Lombardi.* Of the evils foretold as coming upon the posterity of Charles Martel, see note to viii. 49. Having concluded the address begun in the last canto, he looks up to heaven (line 8) in confidence that God will accomplish the restoration of his family; upon which Dante contrasts his piety with the infidelity of mankind in general:—"Ah miserable souls," &c.

21. *Proof that on thee I may reflect my thought.*

"It is a theological doctrine, more fully expressed line 74, (see also cantos xi. 20, and xv. 61) that as God sees the thoughts of all created minds, and as the saints see all that is in God, so by consequence every saint sees the thoughts of all created minds. A proof of this truth Dante here asks of the spirit."—*Lombardi.*

28. *Rises a hill, nor rises to great height.*

Upon a hill in the Marca Trevigiana, near Padua, dwelt the tyrant Ezzelino III., here likened to a torch. (See *Inf.* canto xii. 109, and note.) He was brother to Cunizza, the spirit now speaking, who is said to have been overcome by her ruling star; and thus prevented obtaining a higher station. But she repines not, she says, (line 35) since after Lethe has been tasted, no remorse is felt. (See line 103.)

37. *This dear and shining gem, that in our heaven.*

Folco di Marsiglia, a celebrated Provençal Poet. (See lines 67 and 82, and notes.)

42. *Since this first life another leaves behind.*

Cunizza's argument is this:—"If a reputation upon earth is so valuable, how much more so an eternity of fame in heaven?"—a sentiment, as Venturi observes, taken from Virgil: "Et dubitamus adhuc virtutem extendere factis."—*Æn.* vi. 80. "This," she adds, "is heeded not by the inhabitants of the Marca Trevigiana. But the Paduans (line 46) shall soon be punished for their unjust attempt to seize Vicenza, and shall dye with their blood the river Bacchiglione.—And at Trevigi, (line 49) Riccardo da Cammino lords it so haughtily that a conspiracy is already on foot to assassinate him." These events are mentioned prophetically, though the defeat of one and the murder of the other had already taken place.

52. *For her fell Pastor's fraud shall Feltro weep.*

"A number of the inhabitants of Ferrara, at war with the Pope, having fled into Feltro for safety, were taken prisoners under false promises by the Bishop of that place, and cruelly put to death."—*Daniello.* Malta was a tower in which the Popes imprisoned great clerical delinquents. "Such," Dante adds, (line 55, &c.) "will be the desire of this Priest to please the Pope, that a large vessel must be required to hold his blood-offerings."

61. *Above are mirrors, (Thrones ye term them.)*

i.e. "And that ye may credit my prophetical words, know that in the empyrean, the Angels, whom ye on earth call Thrones, are like so many mirrors."—*Venturi.* (See note to line 21.)

67. *Known to me now that other joyous light.*

Folco di Marsiglia, made known to Dante through Cunizza's account of his fame. (See line 37, and note line 82.) "The sign which spiritual Intelligences in heaven give of their desire to converse with the travellers that visit their respective abodes, by shining out from among their companions with intenser lustre, is of the same happy character of thought with the idea of Beatrice's beauty brightening as she mounts from sphere to sphere."—*James Montgomery.*

77. *In concert tuned with those adoring Fires.*

The Seraphim were described (canto viii. 28) as singing Hosanna together with the spirits. Their six wings are mentioned by Isaiah, (cap. vi. 2.)

82. *Of all the vales wherein are waters pent.*

The object of the following lines is, to point out the dwelling place of Folco, who was born at Genoa, but resided at Marseilles. He is said to have been much honoured by Richard I. of England, and Raymond of Thoulouse. His verses having perished, he lives only in Dante's work. On the death of his wife he entered into a monastery, and is said to have become Bishop of Marseilles. The "vale of waters" here spoken of is the Mediterranean. Its shores, inhabited by people of opposite habits and manners, are called "discordant," in imitation of Virgil: "Littora littoribus contraria."—*Æn.* iv. 628. "They who live near the Straits of Gibraltar have their horizon at Jerusalem....Whosoever therefore should advance thence to Palestine, (*i.e.* a fourth part of the circle of the earth) would have the meridian where he before had the horizon."—*Volpi.* Buggia (line 91) is a city in the state of Algiers, opposite to, and under the same meridian with Genoa, the place of Folco's birth. The slaughter alluded to is that committed by the Saracens, in 936.

97. *Not Belus' daughter burnt with fiercer flame.*

Dido.—The maid of Rhodope, Phyllis.—Iole's lover, Hercules.

107. *Such passion, and the wisdom manifold.*

The reading "affetto" is adopted in preference to that of "effetto." (See Cesari. Bellezze di Dante.)

118. *For first of souls was she who in this sphere.*

Of Rahab, see Joshua, cap. ii. and Hebrews xi. 31. "Though all the inhabitants of Jericho were alarmed at the approach of Joshua, this woman alone turned her sense of its imminent danger to any good account: she believed what had been told her as to the former history of the Israelites; and she reasoned sensibly, and acted promptly upon her belief; and therefore she is not condemned in the Scriptures as an example of treachery, but recorded with honour as an example of both faith and works. 'By faith,' says St. Paul, 'Rahab perished not with them that believed not when she had received the spies with peace.' (*Heb.* xi. 31.) 'Was not Rahab,' says St. James, 'justified by works when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?' (*James* ii. 25.)"—*Scripture History. By the Hon. and very Rev. Henry E. J. Howard, D.D., Dean of Lichfield.*

119. *Whereon the shadow of your earth doth rest.*

According to Ptolemy, the shadow of the earth ends in the planet Venus. The triumph of Christ is that achieved over Satan when he visited the spirits in Limbo. (See *Inf.* iv. 53, and note.)

126. *That land of which the Pope takes little heed.*

The Pope forgets it is in the hands of the Saracens. Florence is called the "plant" of Satan;—and Envy was most rife there. (See *Inf.* xv. 68.) The floren was the gold coin in use at Florence, which Dante says, the Pope so coveted that he became a very wolf. (See *Inf.* i 49.)

134. *The Fathers too; and the Decretals sought.*

The Decretals were books of ecclesiastical law in no good celebrity. Boniface, at that time Pope, was well versed in them. The term "lor vivagne" may be applied, as in the text, to the margins of the Decretals, which were well worn, or to the garments of the Priests.—The liberation looked forward to (line 139) is supposed by Landino to allude to the death of Boniface,—by Venturi, to the arrival of Henry of Luxemburg,—by Lombardi, to the removal of the Holy See to Avignon. "St. Peter's faithful host," means the blessed army of martyrs. Boniface is called an adulterer in the last line from his simoniacal practices mentioned in the Inferno. (See canto xix. 53, and note.)

CANTO X.

9. *Where the two motions, link'd in one, combine.*

"Dante and Beatrice are ascending towards the sun, which was then in Aries, and at the point where the zodiac and equator intersect each other."—*Lombardi.*

21. *Which reigns below, and in the realms on high.*

"The poet means the two poles, the Arctic and the Antarctic, conformable to Virgil: 'Hic vertex nobis semper sublimis,' &c. (*Georg.* i. 242)"—*Volpi.*

28. *Nature's great Minister, whose ray sublime.*

The sun, entering Aries. (See note, line 9.) "According to our poet's system, as the earth is motionless, the sun passes by a spiral motion from one tropic to another."—*Cary.*

34. *And I was with him; nor perceiv'd I ought.*

So swift was his ascent to the sun, that Dante could not perceive his progress, and was sensible of his arrival only.

41. *Shone in the sun, distinguish'd not indeed.*

"He attributes this great splendour to the souls of learned Divines seen by him in the sun, according to Daniel (xii. 3.)"—*Lombardi.* They are afterwards described as "living lustres," and "glowing suns," (lines 65, 76.)

72. *Which may not be extracted from their place.*

i.e. "Which cannot be understood out of Paradise."—*Lombardi.* "To expect to mount up," adds Dante, "without the wings of Faith and Hope, is to expect to understand things inexplicable."

87. *Which every one remounteth who descends.*

An allusion to Jacob's ladder. "It is impossible for a heart that has once tasted the delights of Paradise to attach itself again to earth."—*Lombardi.* The speaker, as mentioned (line 99,) is Thomas Aquinas. He proceeds to tell Dante that he cannot refuse him, in his thirst, wine out of his flask; *i.e.* that he cannot refuse to give him the information he desires.

96. *They thrive, unless they fall through vanity.*

(See note, xi. 25, 137.) The spirit who next appears is Albertus Magnus, instructor of the celebrated Thomas Aquinas, the principal speaker in the ensuing cantos. "He was poisoned according to our poet by Charles de Valois, who feared that he would discover his evil machinations."—*Volpi.*

103. *From Gratian's smile that other flame doth rise.*

Graziano di Chiusi, a Benedictine Monk.—He wrote a book on the civil and canon law; and these are the "two forums" referred to. Peter Lombardo (line 107) was a famous writer on Theology, who upon dedicating his work to the Church, assimilated himself to the poor widow who gave her two mites.

109. *The fifth light, fairest amid all our fires.*

This light, we are presently told, contained the spirit of Solomon; whose destiny, whether to heaven or hell, has been long questioned among Divines. (See note, xiii. 139.) The expression (line 114) "If truth be truth," means, "If the word of God cannot be false;" referring to Kings, B. i. cap. iii. 12.: "Lo, I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

115. *Nearer, that radiant taper meets thy view.*

Dionysius the Areopagite; of whom see canto xxviii. 130, and note. The "mighty advocate," (line 119) Paulus Orosius.—He wrote a book against Heresy, dedicated to St. Augustin, who made use of it in his works, according to the interpretation given to line 120.

125. *The soul who pointed out the world's dark ways.*

Boethius.—From his work, De Consolatione Philosophiæ, Dante took many ideas, and in his Convito calls him his comforter and instructor. He suffered a violent death under Theodoric, King of the Goths, and is supposed to have been buried in the Church of St. Peter at Pavia, called Cielo d'oro—now Cielaureo. The "exile" spoken of, means this world, to which Adam and his posterity were banished from Paradise, and in which we are strangers and pilgrims.

131. *Of Isidaurus, Bede, Riccardo.*

St. Isidaurus, Bishop of Seville.—He composed several works, and died in 636. The venerable Bede wrote an ecclesiastical history of England. Riccardo da S. Vittore was a great Theologian at Paris, and wrote a work, De Cœntemplatione, quoted by Dante in his Epistle to Can Grande. "The street of straw, is a place in Paris where logic was read, and straw for horses sold, whence it obtained its name."—*Ottimo Commento.* Sigieri was a philosopher and divine who taught in this street.

139. *Then, like a clock, that summons us away.*

The circling motion, and song of the "glorious circle" of these spirits is likened by the poet to the wheel of the clock, which Landino says, the religious of old times made use of, to waken them betimes for divine service. By the "spouse of God," is meant the Church, or congregation of the faithful.

CANTO XI.

1. *O the insensate labour men bestow.*

" O miseras hominum mentes! O pectora cæca!
Qualibus in tenebris vitæ, quantisque periclis
Degitur hoc ævi quodcunque est!" *Lucretius*, ii. 14.

This exclamation introductory to Thomas Aquinas's speech (line 19), continued from the last canto, is directed against the modern Dominicans, who had abandoned themselves to worldly pursuits.

25. *Where lately, I observed, 'They thrive,'*

i.e. In the last canto, (line 96.) The view there given of the vanity of the modern Dominicans causes a doubt in Dante's mind as to St. Dominic. This, Aquinas proceeds to solve, by giving a laudatory history of St. Francis, and declaring that St. Dominic was a colleague worthy of him (line 119); thus showing that St. Dominic was not answerable for the degeneracy of his followers, (see line 124.) The words, " Its like, &c. (line 26) referring to Solomon, are taken from canto x. 114. This second doubt is explained in canto xiii. 34:—" the distinction drawn," being, in what sense Solomon is called incomparable.

29. *Whose counsels are more deep than may be seen.*

" Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; whom, although to know be Life,—and Joy to make mention of his name; yet our soundest knowledge is, to know that we know him not as indeed he is, neither can know him; and our safest eloquence concerning him

is our silence, when we confess, without confession, that his glory is inexplicable, his greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth: therefore it behoves our words to be wary and few."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol.* B. i.

31. *To the intent and holy end that She.*

The Church—espoused to our Saviour in His passion. Her two conductors—St. Francis d'Assisi, and St. Dominic. The one, founder of the order of the Frati Minori, and the other, of the Frati Predicatori.

43. *Betwixt Turpino, and the stream descending.*

The situation of Assesi, or Ascesi, where St. Francis was born in 1182, is described as between the streams of Turpino and Chiassi, to which St. Ubaldo retired.—Gualdo and Nocera, situated behind the hill, were towns oppressed by Perugia. The name of the place where this "mighty sun" was born should be changed, says Dante, from Ascesi to Orient, according to Buonaventura, who in his life of St. Francis, appropriated to him the words of St. John: "I saw another Angel ascending from the rising of the Sun," &c.

55. *For sake of her whom all as death detest.*

i.e. For the sake of Poverty, (see line 75.)—He is said to have been beaten for throwing away money, by his father. Before him and the Bishop ("the spiritual court," line 61) he, about the year 1207, renounced all-earthly possessions. From the time of our Saviour, "who had not where to lay his head," to that of St. Francis, (*i.e.* above 1100 years) Poverty is said (line 64) to have had no husband. "Many have been led to suppose, from a few isolated passages, that Christianity discountenances the possession of wealth in its disciples, and enjoins the profession of a voluntary

poverty, as a means of securing the especial favour of the Almighty. But the Gospel, when fairly interpreted, contains no intimation to that effect...The rich man is a servant of God charged with great responsibilities."—*Sermons by the Rev. W. Harness*, pp. 55, 70.

67. *Nor did it aught avail, that at the sound.*

i.e. "It availed not, to make men embrace Poverty, that she enabled Amyclas, the poor fisherman, to sleep securely in the neighbourhood of hostile armies, and to hear without alarm the voice of Cæsar." The story is from Lucan, (*Phars.* v. 504.) He relates that Cæsar, having quitted the camp by night, alone, and wandering by the sea shore, knocked at the hut of Amyclas, who taking him for some shipwrecked man, "Quisnam mea naufragus, inquit, Tecta petit? aut quem nostræ Fortuna coëgit Auxilium sperare casæ?" whereon the poet makes Cæsar exclaim :—

"O vitæ tuta facultas
Pauperis, angustique lares! o munera nondum
Intellecta Deûm! quibus hoc contingere templis,
Aut potuit muris, nullo trepidare tumultu,
Cæsareâ pulsante manu?"

Dante's exclamation, (line 82) "O unknown riches, O true source of good!" is copied from this passage. Juvenal's tenth satire seems also to have been in the poet's mind :—

"Pauca licet portes argenti vascula puri,
Nocte iter ingressus, contum gladiumque timebis,
Et motæ ad lunam trepidabis arundinis umbram:
Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator."

79. *So that the sainted Bernard first began.*

"St. Bernard first followed the example of St. Francis by going barefoot, in imitation of the Apostles."—*Lombardi.* Egidius and Sylvester were two of the followers of St. Francis.

85. *Thence with his Spouse, and with the holy train.*

"Thence," *i.e.* "from his country," St. Francis (styled "father and lord," as the founder and master of the Order) proceeded to Rome, unabashed by his low birth, and accompanied by his Spouse and family, (*i.e.* Poverty and her followers) who wore the girdle. There in 1214 (line 91) he opened his "hardy purpose" to Innocent, who sanctioned the establishment of his order, which (line 98) was subsequently confirmed by Honorius III. Peter Bernardon, (line 89)—a man in low circumstances.

106. *In mount Alverna, on the rigid stone.*

i.e. On mount Alverna in the Appennines he perfected his sufferings, and inflicted on himself the stigmata or marks, resembling the wounds of Christ—(here called the "last seal of Christ,") which were found on his body at his death. Recommending Poverty, "his dearest Lady" (line 112), to his followers, and forbidding any ceremony to be observed at his funeral, "his spirit returned to God who gave it."

118. *Judge now of him who was esteem'd to be.*

i.e. "Think what he must have been who was a worthy colleague of St. Francis to sustain the bark of St. Peter, *i.e.* the Church of God:—and such a colleague was our Patriarch St. Dominic." "He says 'our' because Thomas Aquinas the speaker, belonged to the order of St. Dominic."—*Landino.*

137. *Since of these splinters thou the root wilt see.*

i.e. "The origin of my discourse." The "il correggier" of the following line, adopted by Lombardi from the Nidob. edit. is explained by him to mean the Dominican Order, from their practice of wearing the girdle. The last line of the canto, conveying a reproof of the successors of St. Dominic, is taken from canto x. 96.

CANTO XII.

1. *Soon as the blessed flame drew near the bound.*

The " blessed flame " is Thomas Aquinas. The " sacred Mill " is the wreath of spirits who encircle the poet, and revolve around him. (See *Monti Proposta*, vol. iii. p. 1.) This circle is encompassed by another (line 5); and the " twofold garland " (line 19) is likened to Juno's handmaid, *i.e.* Iris, or the rainbow. " Similes and metaphors follow in rapid succession, and vie with one another in beauty. Indeed there is a fulness of splendour, even to prodigality, throughout the beginning of this canto."—*Cary.* The second garland is compared (line 14) to the Nymph Echo, who was consumed by love of Narcissus.

24. *Of light to light fresh brilliancy affording.*

The spirits animate each other's charity; and thus one light is said to increase another's brilliancy. The " new splendours " (line 28) are the spirits of the second circle, which lately encompassed the first. Of these, the one who speaks is Buonaventura. " By an act of mutual courtesy, Buonaventura, a Franciscan, is made to proclaim the praises of St. Dominic,—as Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican, has celebrated those of St. Francis; and in like manner each blames the irregularities not of the other's order, but of that to which himself belonged."—*Cary.*

43. *Raised up two champions to his Bride's relief.*

i.e. God brought to the aid of his Spouse, the Church, " two champions,"—St. Francis and St. Dominic, (see last canto, line 35.) The country of the latter, viz. Spain—is described, as that

fair clime, where "reserata viget genitabilis aura Favoni." (*Lucretius*, i. 11.) There, stands the tower of Callaroga, protected by the King of Castile, (in whose coat of arms are represented two lions, one upon a castle, the other under a castle,) and this was the birth-place of St. Dominic.

57. *Kind to his own, was dreaded by his foes.*

Βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς, καὶ φιλοισιν εὐμενῆ.
Euripides, Medea. v. 805. Quoted by *Cary.*

"The allusion that follows is to the dream of his mother, when pregnant, that she should bring forth a white and black dog with a lighted torch in his mouth, implying the dress of the order, and the ardent zeal of the holy Patriarch."—*Venturi.*

64. *She who for him gave answer, in her sleep.*

"His godmother dreamt that he had a star on his forehead, and on the nape of the neck, whence both the East and the West were illuminated."—*Venturi.* He was named "Dominicus," the possessive of Dominus, *i.e.* "Belonging to the Lord."

75. *Was after the first counsel given of Christ.*

"If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor," &c.—(*Matt.* xix. 21.) "While yet a youthful student, he sold his books, and other possessions, and distributed to the poor."—*Landino.* The object of his life, as designated by his attitude was, self-humiliation. Christo is repeated here three times as an identical rhyme;—and it may be mentioned (what has not been observed before) that whenever Dante uses the word as a rhyme, which he does four times in the Paradiso, the same repetition invariably occurs. (See xiv. 104; xix. 104; xxxii. 85: also note to xxx. 95.) Hence it would appear that he considered no

other word worthy to form a rhyme with Christo. In these special instances, the licence of the Italian has been followed.

79. *Happy his father, truly Felix hight!*

"Felix Gusman, father of St. Dominic. His mother was called Joanna, signifying 'full of grace.' Cardinal Ostiense (line 83) was a commentator on the Decretals."—*Volpi.* To such subjects, and to temporal gain, says Dante, the clergy and people attended rather than to the Bible; and for this depravity, which infected the "vineyard," (*i.e.* the Church) the Pope is blameable.

96. *The Plants that gird thee with a zone of light.*

i.e. The twenty-four glorious souls that formed the circle or garland, with which Dante was surrounded. By "the seed of their glory" is meant the true Faith. (See *Purg.* xxix. 83.)

99. *Like torrent gushing from a lofty source.*

"Quasi torrente ch'alta vene preme."

A celebrated line.—The poet seems to have had in view the "Monte decurrens velut amnis" of Horace; (*Odes.* iv. 2, 5) the "Rapidus montano flumine torrens" of Virgil; (*Æn.* ii. 305) and the "Montibus ex altis magnus decursus aquai" of Lucretius, (B. i. 284.) Hence, continuing the metaphor, Dante calls his followers "streams" (line 103); the Church "the universal garden;" and Christians "little trees."

106. *If such, one wheel of the resplendent car.*

The one wheel, St. Dominic—the other, St. Francis; lauded by Thomas Aquinas in the last canto. The car of the Church was described in the Purgatorio, canto xxix. 106.

112. *But the old mark which the circumference wore.*

i.e. They follow not the rules of their predecessors. By the "generous crust" of old wine becoming musty (line 114) Dante intimates that good old habits are corrupted. In the ensuing lines he has Jeremiah in view, (vii. 24) "Soon," he adds, "will the parable be fulfilled; the tares will be burnt up, and the wheat gathered into the barn."

121. *He who would search our volume's every fold.*

i.e. Though among our order some few may be found of the original stamp (line 123); such, however, are not to be met with at Casale, in Montferrat; or Aquasparte, in the territory of Todi. At the latter place the rules of the order had been relaxed; at the former enforced too strictly.

127. *Buonaventura's soul am I.*

(See note, line 24.) Buonaventura was a Cardinal. Agostin and Illuminato, two of the first followers of St. Francis. Ugo de Sanvittore, a celebrated Divine; Peter Mangiadore, an ecclesiastical Writer; Peter of Spain, a Logician; Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople; Anselm, of Canterbury; Donatus, a Grammarian; Raban, a brother of the venerable Bede.

CANTO XIII.

1. *Let him who would conceive what met mine eye.*

i.e. "Whoever would conceive the sight that now presented itself to me, must imagine fifteen of the brightest stars in heaven, together with seven stars of Arcturus Major, and two of Arcturus Minor (called the 'horn,' line 10) ranged in two circles, one within the other, each resembling the crown of Ariadne, and moving round in opposite directions."—*Cary.* "These two garlands of the twenty-four lights, circling in twofold dance around Dante and Beatrice, so pleased the poet, that he here returns to them,—continually describing them by some new and beautiful image."—*Cesari. Bellezze di Dante.* Of the primum mobile, see note, ii. 112. When Ariadne was about to die, the garland around her head is said to have been changed by Bacchus into a wreath of stars.

24. *Is with Chiana's stream beyond compare.*

Chiana—a river of Tuscany of slow current. (See note *Inf.* xxix. 48.)

32. *That one, which of the lowly man of God.*

i.e. Thomas Aquinas,—who had related the history of St. Francis in the tenth canto. Having "obtained the grain from one ear" (line 34,) *i.e.* having solved one question (canto x. 111,) he proceeds to answer the other. (See note to x. 95.) "You believe that Adam, created innocent in Paradise, and our Saviour, who was without sin, (being both made immediately by God) were endued with all the perfections of which human nature is capable. Wherefore you cannot understand how I, speaking of Solomon (the spirit seen in yon fifth star, line 46,) could say

'Its like hath never been,'" (x. 114.)—*Lombardi.* He proceeds to show (line 88) that in this there is no inconsistency; but he first confirms the truth of Dante's belief as to Adam and Christ, viz. that whatever may be the case with beings created by secondary causes—they, created immediately by God, were perfect. This is the object of the long digression from line 37 to 88; when Dante reverts to the original question.

53. *Are but the beam of His idea.*

See note to *Purgatory* xvi. 85. The "Light" (line 55) is the Word, proceeding from the Father, and yet united both with Him and the Holy Ghost. The nine subsistencies (line 59) are the nine heavens; of which see note canto ii. 112. From these, he says, the ray of God is communicated to the lower orders of beings—becoming weaker and weaker by being reflected, till at last (line 63) it produces "brief contingencies," *i.e.* the shortest-lived beings. (See canto vii. 67, 130, 142.)

67. *Their wax, and He who shapes it.*

By "their wax, and He who shapes it," are intended matter, and the virtue that acts upon it. By the "ideal seal," the impress of the divine Idea, or Word. The trees (line 70) represent human creatures, who though alike in specie, produce different fruits. "We see many men so vile, and in such a degraded state, that they appear nothing better than beasts; and hence we may lay down, and fully believe that some may be so noble, and of so exalted a nature that they can be, as it were, only Angels."—*Dante Convito.*

73. *More exquisitely if the wax were moulded.*

i.e. "In order to produce perfection, not only must the matter be of the best quality, but the informing Virtue must proceed immediately from God."

79. *Wherefore if ardent Love should grant a view.*

Thus (*i.e.* by the immediate operation of God) Adam's original clay was endued with all the perfection of which the animal nature was capable;—thus, in the pure womb of the Virgin Mary, was formed the most holy body of Jesus Christ, according to the saying of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee."—*Lombardi.* Hence "the Twain" (line 87) refers to Adam and Christ.

93. *When told to 'ask,' he proffer'd the demand.*

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad....And God said unto him, Because, &c....Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."—1 *Kings*, iii. 9, &c. (See also 2 *Chron.* i. 9.)

98. *He cared not; or if from contingency.*

Logic teaches, that from two premises, one general and the other particular, a general consequence cannot be drawn; since "conclusio semper sequitur debiliorem partem."

104. *That royal prudence I alluded to.*

"If we consider well, good counsels come from prudence, which in human affairs leads to a good end. And this is that gift, which Solomon, seeing that he was appointed to the government of the people, asked of God."—*Dante Convito.*

127. *Thus did Sabellius, Arius, many a score.*

As Parmenides and Melissus represent the old Philosophers

who erred; so Sabellius and Arius represent the new. They are compared to swords, for having mutilated and distorted the Scriptures. "Sabellius denied the personality of the Holy Ghost. ...In the language of the Athanasian Creed, the Sabellians confounded the persons, the Arians and Macedonians divided the substance of the Godhead."—*Dr. E. Burton. Works*, vol. i. pp. 418, 420.

139. *Let not Ser Martin or Dame Bertha say.*

Names put generally for any persons who have more curiosity than discretion.—Here Dante appears to reprove those who would doubt as to the salvation of Solomon, whom he has placed in Paradise. (See note x. 109.) The warning is general, nor let the conciseness of Dante's manner cause so admirable an argument for charity to be overlooked. Too apt are we in the pride of our hearts, on seeing our neighbour err, to infer from one error a total want of principle—whereas, such an inference should not be drawn from single acts of frailty to which the best are exposed, and may heartily repent of immediately.

"Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark
How far perhaps they rue it.
Who made the heart, 'tis *He* alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord—its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted." *Burns*

CANTO XIV.

1. *From rim to centre, or reversely, flows.*

"The spirit of St. Thomas having concluded, Beatrice took up his speech, which suggests to the poet the new and beautiful opening to the present canto, with a simile of the different modes in which water ripples, when it has received an impulse within a vessel, in order that the reader may not lose sight of the circle, in which the spirits were standing, with Beatrice and Dante in the centre."—*Biagioli.*

35. *I heard a modest voice.*

The light from which the voice is heard is that of Solomon, as appears from canto x. 109.

40. *Bright in proportion to our ardour this.*

(See *Purg.* xv. 70.) The idea in the following lines is more fully expressed in the Inferno, (vi. 106.) Their persons are rendered more agreeable, not to God, as Lombardi and Biagioli explain it, but to themselves. Milton, speaking of the Angels (*Par. Lost,* v. 475) and other created beings, says, they are "endued with various forms, and various degrees of substance:

> But more refined, more spirituous and pure,
> As nearer to Him placed, or nearer tending."

52. *But as, while flame emitting, charcoal still.*

i.e. Burning charcoal is so much whiter than the flame it emits, that it is visible in the fire.

67. *And lo, on high, and lucid as the one.*

The light "now there," *i.e.* "already there," is the light proceeding from the two circles of spirits before described, and which are presently encompassed by a third circle. The image of the lighting up of eve is from Virgil, (*G.* i. 251.)

"Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper."

82. *For loftier flight were then mine eyes restored.*

As it may seem paradoxical that Dante's sight, dazzled by the brightness of the spirits, should be re-invigorated by the increased lustre of Beatrice, it must be remembered that in metaphorical language the eyes mean the intellect, and that Beatrice herself is Heavenly Wisdom. Dante is now exalted to the planet Mars.

88. *With all the heart, and by that speech which is.*

i.e. "By the internal emotions of the mind, the same among all people, however differently expressed by different nations."—*Lombardi.*

96. "*O Sun,*" *I cried,* "*how brilliant is thy light.*"

"Elios," translated "Sun," from the Greek Ηελιος, may be also rendered God, El, or Eli;—Helios in Hebrew signifying "lofty." The two beams or streaks form a cross, likened to the milky way. Milton (*Par. Lost,* vii. 576) calls "the way to the house of God"

"A broad and ample road, whose dust is gold,
And pavement stars; as stars to thee appear
Seen in the galaxy—that milky way," &c.

The poet places the sign of the cross in Mars (line 100,) in reference to the holy warfare of Christians.

109. *From horn to horn, and 'twixt the base and height.*

"From the extremity of one arm to the other, and from the head to the foot of the cross."—*Venturi.*

115. *Sport in the sunbeam, where is streak'd the shade.*

"As thick as motes i' th' sunbeam."—*Chaucer.*

As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sunbeams.
Milton. Pens. (Quoted by Cary.)

"Contemplator enim, cum solis lumina cunque
Inserti fundunt radii per opaca domorum,
Multa minuta modis multis per inane videbis
Corpora misceri radiorum lumine in ipso;
Et velut æterno certamine prælia pugnasque
Edere turmatim certantia." *Lucretius* ii. 113.

125. *For—"Rise again," I heard, "and victor be."—*

"These words are taken from a hymn sung by the Church in praise of Christ."—*Venturi.*

133. *But since each living seal of beauty glows.*

By the "living seals of beauty" are meant all the created things that bear the divine stamp. They are here used in the first place, for the "higher heavens," into which Dante had ascended; and in the second place, for the "eyes of Beatrice." As the one had increased in brilliancy, so had the other.

138. *For hence is banish'd not the holy smile.*

i.e. Of Beatrice. "Piacer santo" is rendered "holy smile" from the expression used in the following canto (line 34,) where Dante again turns his look on Beatrice, "Che dentro agli occhi suoi ardeva un riso tal."

CANTO XV.

4. *Now still'd the lyre of that melodious band.*

"The poet having previously mentioned the song which the blessed were singing in the splendid cross, now relates how they ceased, by their own voluntary act of kindness and without entreaty, to give him an opportunity of addressing them."—*Lombardi.* "He calls the cross 'a lyre,' and the voices of the spirits "the chords."—*Venturi.*

10. *Well may he ever grieve, that for the love.*

"And O, what will it avail a man to be compassed about with the favour of the world, to sit unmolested in his own house and possessions, and to have them very great and pleasant,—to be well married and landed and befriended, and yet estranged and severed from God, not having any token of his special love?"—*Archbishop Leighton. Com. on St. Peter,* cap. i.

19. *So from the horn extending to the right.*

The spirit of Cacciaguida, Dante's ancestor, glides down from the cross, and addresses him. "He is on the right hand of the cross with respect to Christ who was in the midst."—*Venturi.*

> "Sæpe etiam stellas, vento impendente, videbis
> Præcipites cælo labi, noctisque per umbram
> Flammarum longos a tergo albescere tractus."
>
> *Virgil. Georg.* i. 365.

Thus Uriel is described by Milton (*Par. Lost,* iv. 556) gliding

> "Swift as a shooting star
> In autumn thwarts the night, when vapours fired
> Impress the air."

26. *(If our most honour'd Muse may be believed.)*

i.e. Virgil, in allusion to Æn. vi. 684.

> " Isque ubi tendentem adversùm per gramina vidit
> Æneam, alacris palmas utrasque tetendit,
> Effusæque genis lacrymæ; et vox excidit ore:
> Venisti tandem, tuaque expectata parenti
> Vicit iter durum pietas?—datur ora tueri,
> Nate, tua; et notas audire et reddere voces?"

The exclamation of Cacciaguida is in Latin,—to show, probably that this language was spoken in his time, (see xiv. 33, and note.) The gate of heaven is opened to Dante, as to St. Paul, twice—once in the body, and again, after death, in the spirit.

51. *That long delicious thirst, which o'er me came.*

i.e. The desire which I have felt to see thee, through my knowledge of thee, obtained in the " mirror," or face of God, (see line 62.) " Dante certainly wished to learn who this spirit was, and why he was more glad to see him than the rest; but he knew that his desires were visible in the great book above mentioned, and he therefore abstained from inquiry."—*Biagioli.*

74. *When ye beheld the First Equality.*

God is called " The First Equality," since by Him all things, whether easy or difficult, are equally capable of execution. Dante, being mortal, cannot express the love he feels, (line 84.)

86. *O living topaz, who this jewel dear.*

The jewel is the cross, of which Cacciaguida was one of the gems. He calls himself the root of the genealogical tree—being

father of Alighieri, the great grandsire of Dante, (see note, line 134.) Alighieri, he adds, has been one hundred years in the first circle of Purgatory, where the proud are punished by carrying heavy stones on their backs; and recommends Dante to shorten by his good deeds the period of his sufferings there. Why Dante had no interview with him there, does not appear.

97. *Florence, confined within that ancient wall.*

"This passage, in which the simple and modest life of the Florentines in the time of Cacciaguida is described, is one of the most beautiful of the Divina Commedia."—*Biagioli.* See a similar account of Florence (A.D. 1259) in Villani. Book vi. cap. 71. The description of the Florentine women reminds one of those of Jerusalem, who contributed to its destruction. "Moreover the Lord saith; Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go."—*Isaiah* iii. 16.

106. *No houses then were void of families.*

i.e. Owing to the extravagance of the parents, or the civil wars of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, whereby many families were exiled. —Sardanapalus, the luxurious King of Assyria, here represents any effeminate person.

109. *Not yet had Florence in her thirst for fame.*

In the original, Rome is termed "Montemalo," (now Montemario) and Florence "Uccellatorio,"—both being mountains commanding a view of their respective cities. Bellincion Berti, praised again in the next canto, (line 99) was the representative of the Ravignani, a noble Florentine family;—such as were also the Nerli, and the Vecchio, mentioned afterwards.

118. *O happy they! each sure to lay the head.*

i.e. Without fear of banishment, so common in the times of Dante, when one dominant party drove out the other. "And in my time," says the poet, "no wife was deserted by her husband that he might get gain in France."—*Venturi.* "Repugnance to occupy his readers with his own particular concerns, (a repugnance of which we have certainly no reason to complain in the authors of the present age) imposed upon Dante his singular silence respecting his family....It is beyond all doubt that he had several sons, and that they lived in a state of proscription and distress until the period of his death. For this fact we are indebted only to the historians. From his own writings it could not be suspected that he was a husband and a father. It is, however, easy to perceive that he is thinking of his family, when he exclaims: 'O fortunate, e ciascuna era certa della sua sepoltura!'—He delights in painting the joys of domestic life, of which he presents a most affecting picture in the verses just quoted."—*Ugo Foscolo. Quarterly Review,* vol. 30.

126. *Stories of Troy, of Fiesole and Rome.*

Of Fiesole, the cradle of Florence, (see *Inf.* xv. 62.)—Lapo, Salterello, and Cianghella—persons of abandoned character; then as rare as persons of an opposite character in Dante's time. Cornelia, the virtuous mother of the Gracchi.

134. *And know, that in your ancient Baptistry.*

Cacciaguida says he was baptized and christened at the same time, in the church of St. John the Baptist, at Florence, (see *Inf.* xix. 17, and note.) The name of his wife, who came from Ferrara, was Alighieri; from whom was derived the surname of the family.

CANTO XVI.

1. *O empty name, Nobility of birth!*

In this exordium Dante confesses, as he has done before, (*Purg.* xiii. 137) that pride was his besetting sin, to which he was led by his noble descent as well as his lofty genius. He disdains, however, all reliance on "the boast of heraldry,"

> "Quoniam nil nostro in compore gazæ
> Proficiunt, neque nobilitas, neque gloria regni."
> *Lucret.* ii. 37.

11. *With "ye," a phrase by Rome first countenanced.*

Discovering his ancestor, the poet changes his language from "Tu" to "Voi," rendered "ye," as more distinctly expressing the proud plurality of the address. Beatrice's smile reminded Dante of the servant who coughed on witnessing the first freedoms of Lancelot towards Queen Ginevra, (see note *Inf.* v. 127.) This ironical smile of Beatrice induces the poet, in the next canto, to revert to the singular number in addressing his ancestor.

25. *Say, of the fold protected by St. John.*

The city of Florence—so called because it had for its protector John the Baptist, (see note *Inf.* xiii. 146.)

33. *But not with that now used—of modern guise.*

i.e. He spoke in Latin, (see note xv. 26.)

37. *Five hundred times and fifty-three this fire.*

Dante means to say, according to Lombardi's calculation, (taking

687 days to a revolution of the planet Mars) that from the day of the Annunciation, to Cacciaguida's birth, about 1090 years had elapsed. To express this, he states that the planet Mars had in the interval returned five hundred and fifty-three times to the constellation Leo. The city of Florence was anciently divided into six districts; and Cacciaguida says that he dwelt in that, last reached by the competitors in the race at the feast of St. John the Baptist. "It was a sign of a family's antiquity to have their house in the heart of the ancient city."—*Lombardi.* (See *Ariosto. Orlando Fur.* Lib. ii. canto 12, line 3.)

50. *Of Campi, and Certaldo, and Figghine.*

Places in the neighbourhood of Florence.—"We may judge how small was the city in the ninth and tenth centuries; since in 1300 the population was 60,000, and in the time of Cacciaguida only a fifth part, or 14,000."—*Lami.*

58. *And if the tribe, who more than any other Malignant are.*

La gente ch'al mondo piu traligna.

This passage fully confirms the interpretation given to "la gente," "the tribe," in *Purg.* vi. 91, and to *Purg.* xvi. 100, where see notes. Here indeed the old Commentators speak out, thus. "The meaning is,—If the Church, of which the Pope is head, &c."—*Landino.* "He calls the Church people, (la gente della chiesa) such as Popes and Cardinals, most degenerate, for reasons all are acquainted with."—*Vellutello.* The Church is called "noverca," as having acted with the hostility of a step-mother to the Emperors, whom she should have treated with the love of a mother. To the Popes he attributes all the evils of Italy, (see notes, *Purg.* xvi. 100, 106.) The flocking of the people from the

country to the city was the effect of the wars between the Pope and the Emperors, which Dante particularly laments here.

79. *Like to yourselves, your works are doom'd to die.*

"Debemur morti nos, nostraque."—*Horace. De Arte. P.*

"Damna tamen celeres reparant," &c.—*Horace. Odes.* B. iv. 7.

"Αμμες δ' οι μεγαλοι, κ, καρτεροι, η σοφοι ανδρες," &c.—*Moschus.*

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power," &c.—*Gray. Elegy.*

See also canto xxvi. 127.

97. *The Ravignani used to dwell.*

The Ravignani who dwelt over the gate of St. Peter, were succeeded by the Cerchi, a modern family, (see line 66.) Count Guido and his family were descended from Bellincion Berti, (canto xv. 112.)

111. ——— *through splendour of the balls of gold!*

i.e. "The Lamberti, the bearings of whose arms were golden balls, bore a part in all the mighty deeds by which Florence was distinguished." One of the Adimari (line 115) is said to have been Dante's capital enemy. He was killed near the broken statue of Mars, (see note, *Inf.* xiii. 146).

125. *The gate into the lesser circle then.*

i.e. "The gate into the walls, before the circle was enlarged, took its name from the family of Pera, which is now extinct."

127. *Each one that bears the insignia of the great Baron.*

Florentine families had been permitted by Count Ugo of Luxemburg, ("the mighty Baron") Lieutenant of the Emperor

Otho III., to bear his arms, and to obtain other privileges of nobility. One of these, Giano della Bella, (line 131) afterwards sided with the people. Ugo died on St. Thomas' day; and the monks used to keep the anniversary. Hence the allusion in the text.

135. *Borgo still had been at rest.*

Borgo, a division of the city so called. By the family "that brought distress upon Florence," are intended the Amidei. The allusion to Buondelmonti breaking his pledge of marriage is explained in note to *Inf.* xxviii. 106. "It had been well," says Dante, "if he had been drowned in the river Ema on his way to Florence."

148. *With these and others Florence have I known.*

i.e. Under the auspices of the old families above mentioned.—"The Florentines adopted for their arms a white lily; but after the civil division, the Guelfs changed it, using a yellow lily on a white shield."—*Landino.*

154. ——— *reversed upon the spear.*

i.e. Carried upside down by a conqueror.

CANTO XVII.

1. *As he who came to Clymene, to enquire.*

Phaeton, in great anxiety, enquired of his mother Clymene if he were indeed the son of Apollo, which had been denied. In a similar state of anxiety was Dante—wishing to question his ancestor Cacciaguida "that most holy light," as to his future life—yet afraid to do so; remembering the impending evils alluded to by Farinata, (*Inf.* x. 81 and 127.)

13. *"Oh my loved stem, exalted to such height.*

Dante addresses Cacciaguida, as Beatrice directs him.

20. *Around the mountain where souls make them pure.*

i.e. To Purgatory, (see viii. 137) "And down," *i.e.* to the Inferno, (see x. 81, and xv. 64.)—Foreseeing the calamities impending over him from the evil disposition of his countrymen, Dante had been strengthening his mind for adversity; and in the Inferno (xv. 93) declared to Brunetto.

"Let Fortune do her worst, prepared am I."

43. *Whence, as soft harmony comes o'er the ear.*

i.e. As from an organ, &c.—so from the face of God is reflected upon my sight your future destiny. "As Hippolitus left Athens to avoid compliance with the love of his step-mother Phædra; so will you depart from Florence to avoid compliance with the desires of your perverse and unnatural countrymen."—*Venturi.* "This," he adds, (line 49) "the Pope and his adherents desire; and the

plot is already laid against you by your enemies at Rome, where Christ is daily bought and sold," *i.e.* where simony is daily practised by the rapacious train of Simon Magus, "who the hallowed things of God, do prostitute to gold and sordid gain." (*Inf.* xix. 2.) "He points to the treaty on foot at Rome with Boniface VIII. to induce Charles Lackland, brother to the king of France, to come to Florence, under pretence of reforming it; but, in truth, to drive out the Bianchi, to which party Dante belonged; as was effected in January, 1302."—*Lombardi.* (See a fuller account in note to *Inf.* vi. 60.)

55. *From each most cherish'd object shalt thou part.*

"Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
Più caramente; e questo è quello strale
Che l'arco d'esilio pria saetta.
Tu proverai si come sa di sale
Il pane altrui, e com' è duro calle
Lo scender' e 'l salir per l' altrui scale;
E quel che più ti graverà le spalle
Sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia,
Con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle."

"It is a miserable thing to go from house to house; for where thou art a stranger, thou darest not open thy mouth. Thou shalt entertain, and feast, and have no thanks: moreover, thou shalt hear bitter words....These things are grievous to a man of understanding—the upbraiding of house-room, and reproaching of the lender." (*Ecclesiasticus* xxix. 24.) Again, (xl. 28, 29) "My Son, lead not a beggar's life, for better it is to die than to beg. The life of him that dependeth on another man's table is not to be counted for a life." The metaphor of the arrow (line 56) is used by Clarendon: "This was an arrow which the House of Commons did not expect would have been shot out of that quiver." (Vol. ii. B. 10, p. 88.) The bitter bread (line 58) reminds one of Shakspeare. (*Richard II.*, act 3, sc. 1.):—

"Myself
Have stooped my neck under your injuries,
And sighed my English breath in foreign clouds,
Eating the bitter bread of banishment."

"Foul and ruffian company," (line 62) completes the misery of the exile. Thus Euripides, (*Phœniss* 397) as quoted by Mr. Cary:

"Καὶ τοῦτο λυπρον, συνασοφειν τοῖς μη σοφοῖς."

"With these vile companions of his exile, Dante in vain attempted a forcible entrance into Florence. After this miscarriage, Dante quitted the confederacy—disgusted by the bickerings, jealousies, and bad faith of the heterogeneous and unmanageable multitude, which common calamities had drawn together, but could not cement by common interests."—*James Montgomery. Life of Dante.* (*Lardner's Cab. Cycl.* No. 63.) The "valley" means Italy in its degraded state, the same valley that in the opening of the Inferno (i. 14) "struck the poet with dismay," and is described at length in the fourteenth of the Purgatorio. But Spencer's beautiful lamentation may not be omitted:—

"Full little knowest thou, that hast not tried,
What Hell it is, in suing long to bide:
To lose good days, that might be better spent;
To waste long nights, in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
To have thy Prince's grace, yet want her Peer's,
To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
To eat thy heart with comfortless despairs;
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
To spend, to give—to want—to be undone.

Mother Hubberd's Tale.

71. *Shall be the mighty Lombard's courtesy.*

Bartolomeo della Scala,—Lord of Verona, whose arms were an eagle upon a ladder.

76. *With him shall one be found, who at his birth.*

Viz. Can Grande della Scala—said to have been born under the influence of the planet Mars, in which Dante now was. His virtue, and contempt of riches are predicted in similar terms in the Inferno, (i. 101, where see note.) See also *Par.* xxx. 136. Pope Clement, the Gascon (line 82,) after making Henry VII. Emperor, secretly assisted his enemies. (Of Clement, see note *Inf.* xix. 82, and *Par.* xxvii. 58.)

95. *The evils whisper'd of.*

Referring to the hints thrown out in the Inf. and Purg. of impending calamities. (See notes, lines 1 and 20.)

110. *That if I lose the place I cherish most.*

i.e. "Foreseeing my exile from Florence, the place of my birth, I must take care, lest, indulging a spirit of satire, I exclude myself from other places also."

134. *Which chiefly doth the loftiest heights assail.*

Imitated from Horace, (ii. B. *Odes.* x. 9.)

"Sæpius ventis agitatur ingens
Pinus: et celsæ graviore casu
Decidunt turres: feriuntque summos
Fulgura montes."

CANTO XVIII.

1. *Now silently that happy soul pursued.*

Cacciaguida.—Dante was also meditating on the predictions made to himself in the last canto, (line 55, &c.)

21. *May elsewhere than within these eyes be view'd.*"

" Quia non solum in contemplatione Theologiæ est felicitas et beatitudo; sed etiam in exemplis valentium virorum."—*Il Postil. Caet.* Upon this warning Dante again turns his attention to Cacciaguida.

28. "*In this fifth step,*" *commenced he,* "*of the tree.*

Mars is the fifth step, or branch of the tree, *i.e.* of the cross mentioned before (xiv. 101,) composed of the spirits of the blessed, and whose summit is Christ.

42. *Gladness the lash which that bright top impell'd.*

> " Ceu quondam torto volitans sub cerbere turbo,
> Quem pueri magno in gyro vacua atria circum
> Intenti ludo exercent; ille actus habena
> Curvatis fertur spatiis; stupet inscia supra
> Impubesque manus, mirata volubile buxum;
> Dant animos plagæ." *Virgil. Æn.* vii. 378.

Of Orlando and Charlemagne see *Inf.* xxxi. 18, and note. William and Rinoard, leaders under Charlemagne,—the latter probably the Rinaldo of Ariosto. Duke Godfrey—Godfrey of Bouillon, " che il gran sepolcro liberò di Christo." Of Robert Guiscard see note *Inf.* xxviii. 14. The spirit who had spoken to Dante (line 49) is Cacciaguida.

64. *And rapid as the change in Maiden's face.*

"I have mark'd
A thousand blushing apparitions start
Into her face; a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness bear away those blushes."
Much ado about Nothing, act iv. sc. 1.

Beatrice, "quel miracolo," (line 63) being now exalted, together with the poet, from Mars to Jupiter, loses the ruddy hue of the former planet, and assumes the more tempered aspect of the latter.

71. *And in that gladsome torch of Jove I saw.*

i.e. "The splendour of the blessed spirits inflamed with charity, who were in that star."—*Lombardi.*

78. *Now like the letter D—now I—now L.*

The three initial letters of Diligite,—as more fully explained, line 91, "Diligite justitiam, qui judicatis terram." "Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth." (*Wisdom* i. 1.)

91. "*Diligite justitiam,*" *first pass'd.*

See last note. The spirits, settling upon the M, compose the figure of an Eagle. (See note, line 107.)

102. *Whence omens are inferr'd by the unwise.*

"Who augur future riches to themselves in proportion to the quantity of sparks that fly from the lighted brand when it is shaken."—*Cary.*

107. ———— *an Eagle's head and neck.*

The Eagle is the type of that universal monarchy which Dante wished to establish. "Those who have rightly administered justice,

and been obedient to the imperial government, are represented in this eagle, which is dedicated to Jupiter."—*Vellutello.* "He who moves the spirits to this configuration is God himself....The meaning of the following lines is, that the spirits, moving a little, completed the figure of the eagle, the head of which they had before made."—*Landinō.* The "M's" (line 113) are the final letters of "Justitiam" and "terram."

116. *By thy bright jewels.*

By the jewels are intended the glorious spirits in Jupiter, whose star is supposed to be the source of Justice on earth: by "the smoke," (line 120) which obscures Justice, the avarice of the Priests. The prayer is thus paraphrased by Landino: "And I pray the divine Mind to look down upon this malignity—that as in his life time Christ was incensed with those who bought and sold in the temple, and drove them out, so now he would show his wrath against the pastors and prelates who practise simony, and sell sacred things in the Church of God." By the "example" of the Pope, (line 126) the world is said to be "gone astray," as more fully set forth in *Purg.* xvi., where all its wickedness is attributed to him. It is added (line 127) that he wages war by excommunication, and denial of the sacramental bread, which God himself denies not to those who truly repent.

130. *And thou, who writest but to blot again.*

i.e. "And thou who sendest forth thy censures, not for the purpose of chastising offenders, but to be paid for revoking them, remember," &c.—*Landino.* This exclamation is addressed either to Pope Boniface, or to Clement V., then living. Of these two Popes, see notes, *Inf.* xix. 77 and 82. The Pope thirsts, Dante adds, with bitter sarcasm, much more for John the Baptist (*i.e.* the floren, or coin of Florence, stamped with his head) than for either St. Peter or St. Paul.

CANTO XIX.

1. *Before my sight now shone with wings outspread.*

" This canto, which to some appears a series of theological and moral discussions, is one of the most beautiful of the Divina Commedia."—*Biagioli.* The " beauteous image " is that of the imperial eagle described in the last canto, composed of the spirits of just men made perfect. " Each spirit glows like a ruby, denoting the fervour of their charity."—*Landino.*

11. *Though in the singular he us address'd.*

Though the Eagle used the singular number, the voice proceeded from many spirits. He is the personification of Justice, and says that he is raised to such glory for having exercised that virtue tempered with mercy, " per esser giusto e pio."—

32. *Ye know the doubt that to my bosom clings.*

Dante had no occasion to reveal to the spirits the doubt that possesses him, since they see it reflected in the mirror of God, (line 30.) His doubt is this—whether persons can be saved who never heard of Christ, (see line 70.)

34. *Lo, as a falcon, from the hood released.*

" This simile pleased Boccaccio so much that he inserted it in almost all his works."—*Biagioli.* It is adduced to show the charitable zeal with which the spirits undertook to remove the doubts of Dante, and to justify the ways of God.

40. ——— "*He his compasses who placed.*

Imitated by Milton, *Par. Lost*, vii. 227:

"In his hand
He took the golden compasses, prepared
In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
This universe, and all created things.

The object is to show, that however munificent the work of creation, still the work is far inferior to the Creator,—the effect to the Cause:—and that His Word, (*i.e.* His Wisdom,) is incomprehensible, and "past finding out." This is illustrated by the fall of Lucifer, who, though the highest of created beings, was so ignorant of the Creator's power, that without waiting for light, he in the pride of his heart set himself up as the equal of God. (Of Lucifer see *Inf.* xxxi. 143.)

51. *Which nought can measure save itself alone.*

"There sits th' Almighty, First of all, and End;
Whom nothing but Himself can comprehend."
Cowley. Davideis. B. i.

"How can the less the Greater comprehend,
Or finite reason reach Infinity?
For what could fathom God were more than He."
Dryden. Religio Laici.

64. *Light is there none, save from the purely bright.*

i.e. No true light descends upon mortals unless from that serene and undisturbed region where God dwells: viz. no Wisdom exists, but what is vouchsafed by divine Grace.

106. *But oh! what multitudes—'Lord, Lord,' exclaim.*

"Not every one that saith unto me—Lord, Lord, shall enter

into the kingdom of heaven," &c. (*Matt.* vii. 21.) "Our Lord warned the impenitent and unbelieving Jews, that many should come from the East, and from the West, and should sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom, the Jews themselves, should be cast out. ...We are taught the instructive lesson, that even the case of the unenlightened Heathen may eventually be less desperate than that of the careless and ungrateful Christian."—*Van Mildert. Serm.* Vol. ii. p. 61. The mention of the two "colleges" refers to the sheep and the goats in St. Matthew, (xxv. 32.) In the Inferno a particular compartment is termed "the college of hypocrisy;" (xxiii. 92;) and hypocrites are here pointed at. The "opening of the volume" (line 113) is an allusion to Rev. xx. 12.

115. *There, 'mid the other deeds by Albert wrought.*

Of Albert, who "let run to waste the garden of the Empire," see *Purg.* vi. 96, and note. He invaded Bohemia in 1303, and gave the crown to his son Rodolph.

118. *There shall be seen the woe that he shall pour.*

Philip the fair.—Having been defeated by the Flemings at the battle of Coutrai, in 1302, he paid his army in spurious coin. He died from the wound of a wild boar in 1314, which proves that Dante had not then finished his poem. Of Philip see note to *Purg.* xx. 43.

121. *There shall be seen the domineering pride.*

The war between Edward I of England, and John Baliol is here spoken of; and in the following lines, Alphonso, King of Spain, and Winceslaus, King of Bohemia, are referred to.—Of them see *Purg.* vii. 101.

127. *There seen the cripple of Jerusalem.*

Charles II. King of Jerusalem and Apulia—so named from being lame, (see *Purg.* vii. 124.) Dante passes from him to his successor Frederick—he "who guards the isle of fire, *i.e.* Sicily, (see canto viii. 79) so called from the eruptions of Ætna. Of him see *Purg.* vii. 119, and notes.

137. *Of the Uncle and the Brother.*

James, King of Majorca and Minorca, and James II. King of Arragon, (see *Purg.* vii. 119.) "He of Portugal," (line 139) refers to Dionysius, who was king in the time of Dante.—Norway was then governed by its own kings, and not subject to Denmark. "He of Rascia" (line 140) points to Ladislaus, of the house of Nemagna, who in Dante's time governed the kingdom of Rascia, or Ratza, in Sclavonia, and seems to have been guilty of gross forgery.

142. *Blest Hungary, if thou could'st set thee free.*

The throne of Hungary was at this time disputed. Navarre was subject to France, but soon after had a king of its own—and "armed the mount," *i.e.* defended the Pyrenees. "Presaging this their delivery from the French yoke," says Dante, (line 145) "Famagosta and Nicosia are now incensed against their King, who is on a par with the rest described above."

CANTO XX.

1. *When he, who with his universal ray.*

i.e. As at sunset the stars appear, shining by a borrowed light; so, when the imperial eagle had ceased to speak, the various splendours of which it is composed, showed themselves, and broke forth into songs. These songs, says Dante, the frail memory of a mortal could not retain. (See canto i. 9, and xxxiii. 57.)

19. *Methought I heard a stream, whose limpid course.*

" Udir mi parve un mormorar di fiume,
Che scende chiaro giu di pietra in pietra
Mostrando l' ubertà di suo cacume."

" Illa cadens raucum per levia murmur
Saxa ciet." *Virgil. Georg.* i. 109.

The murmur of the river is compared to the murmur produced by the spirits in the throat of the eagle.

45. *Consoled the widow for her murder'd son.*

For this story see *Purg.* x. 77, and note. The " next " spirit is Hezekiah, who prevailed with God to add fifteen years to his life (*Isaiah* xxxviii. and 2 *Kings*, xx.)

52. *Now knows he that God's Justice changeth not.*

i.e. " The eternal counsels of God are indeed immutable, though they appear to us men to be altered by the prayers

of the pious."—*Cary.* A passage in the Purgatorio (vi. 37) is very similar:—

"For Judgment stoops not from His lofty seat,
Though love's warm flame in one short moment may
That ransom work, these should themselves complete."

56. *A Greek became with me and with the laws.*

Constantine carried the imperial eagle and the laws of Rome to Byzantium, and thus caused the evil arising from the union of temporal and spiritual power in the person of the Pope; so bitterly lamented by Dante in the Inferno, "Ah Constantine," &c. (xix. 115) and again in the De Monarchiâ, "O felicem populum, O Ausoniam gloriosam, si vel nunquam infirmator ille imperii tui natus fuisset, vel nunquam sua pia intentio ipsum fefellisset."

61. *He, lower in the arch, was William.*

William II.—"William was a just Prince, who loved his subjects, and preserved them in such tranquillity that the life the Sicilians led might be considered that of the terrestrial Paradise." *Ottimo Commento.* Charles II. and Frederick of Arragon are the two princes with whom he is contrasted.

68. *Would think the Trojan Ripheus e'er could be.*

"Cadit et Ripheus, justissimus unus
Qui fuit in Teucris, et servantissimus æqui."
Virgil. Æn. ii. 426.

Most gratuitous is the assertion (line 103) that Ripheus had a foreknowledge of Christ through the especial grace of God.

73. *As when the lark high soaring doth rejoice.*

This simile is beautiful in the Italian.

" Qual lodoletta che 'n aere si spazia
Prima cantando, e poi tace contenta
Dell' ultima dolcezza che la sazia;
Tal mi sembiò l' imago della 'mprenta
Dell' Eterno Piacere."

" Aguglia della imprenta," *i.e.* " stampa dell' piacere di Dio."—*Ottimo Commento.*

79. *And though with reference to my doubt, was I.*

i.e. The doubt expressed in the last canto, whether those who knew not Christ can be saved.—" Though," says Dante, " my conviction was visible through my person, as though it were transparent glass, yet I could not resist breaking out with the question; ' What are these ?' " " As if he should have said; ' Here the divine Justice cannot take effect; since Trajan and Ripheus, both Heathen, are in the most exalted station, (the eye of the eagle) assigned to those who have believed in Christ.' "—*Ottimo Commento.* Dante feigns astonishment at finding heathen spirits in Paradise, in order to afford opportunity of further explanation on the subject. This the Eagle proceeds to give, (line 94)—" Heaven's kingdom," &c.

94. *Heaven's kingdom suffers violence.*

" And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent take it by force."—*Matt.* xi. 12.—*i.e.* Heaven permits itself to be overcome by earnest and importunate prayer.

100. *The first and fifth light of the arch may well.*

The first light, Trajan—the fifth, Ripheus. "You may well be surprised that in Paradise should dwell the spirits of those whom you take for Heathen." Of Trajan, who was released from death by the prayers of St. Gregory, (line 110,) see reference in note to line 45. "If Abraham 'rejoiced' in the expectation of His appearance;—if in Christ 'all the nations of the earth were to be blessed;'—if He was 'the desire of all nations;'—if, 'as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive;'—what can we infer, but that the benefits of redemption were to extend to the faithful through all ages, past, present, and to come?"—*Bp. Van Mildert. Works*, vol. v. p. 353. "He that endeavours really to mortify his lusts, and to comply with that truth in his life, which his conscience is convinced of, is nearer a Christian, though he never heard of Christ, than he that believes all the vulgar articles of the Christian faith, and plainly denieth Christ in his life."—*Cudworth. Intell. Sys. Serm.* i. p. 43. But the views of Dante on this subject cannot be better expressed than in the celebrated passage of Dryden, which is too excellent and apposite to be omitted:—

> "We grant, 'tis true, that Heaven from human sense
> Has hid the secret paths of Providence:
> But boundless Wisdom, boundless Mercy, may
> Find e'en for those bewilder'd souls a way:
> If from His nature foes may pity claim,
> Much more may strangers who ne'er heard his name.
> And though no name be for salvation known,
> But that of his eternal Son alone;
> Who knows how far transcending Goodness can
> Extend the merits of that Son to man?
> Who knows what reasons may his mercy lead;
> Or ignorance invincible may plead?
> Not only Charity bids hope the best,
> But more the great Apostle has express'd:

That if the Gentiles, whom no law inspired,
By nature did what was by law required;
They, who the written rule had never known,
Were to themselves both rule and law alone:
To nature's plain indictment shall they plead;
And by their conscience be condemn'd or freed.
Most righteous doom! became a rule reveal'd
Is none to those from whom it was conceal'd.
Then those who follow'd Reason's dictates right,
Lived up, and lifted high their natural light,
With Socrates may see their Maker's face,
While thousand rubric-martyrs want a place."

Dryden. Religio Laici.

128. *For him were sponsors those three ladies.*

i.e. Faith, Hope, and Charity, who danced upon the right wheel of the triumphal car in the terrestrial Paradise, were sponsors for Ripheus 1000 years before our Saviour's birth," (see *Purg.* xxix. 122.)

130. *Predestination! oh how distant lies.*

i.e. "How little able are mortals to judge of the reasons which influence God in the choice of his vessels," the called according to his purpose?" "We must never measure others by ourselves. If we seek more after the essential matter, viz. the contrite spirit, and the genuine love of Christ, whom at present we are apt to overlook...let us give up all narrow notions of the kingdom of God. Moreover, as the Lord knoweth them that are his, and we do not always know them, let us not presume to judge of their number by our own knowledge. They may not be made and fashioned according to our preconceived pattern: they may not wear the garb and cut of our own preference, and yet they may be citizens of heaven."—*Elijah the Tishbite. By T. W. Krummacher. The Hidden Church.*

CANTO XXI.

6. *The fate of Semele would soon be thine.*

Semele having excited the jealousy of Juno, was instigated by her to ask Jupiter to reveal himself in all his majesty. He did so, and she was reduced to ashes.

13. *Now to the seventh light have we ascended.*

Saturn—in conjunction with Leo.

18. *What this resplendent glass shall give to view.*

i.e. The planet Saturn. He proceeds to say, that he only who knows the delight he experienced in gazing upon Beatrice, can tell the pleasure wherewith he obeyed her voice.

25. *Within the crystal that partakes the name.*

See last note. "Chiaro" instead of "caro" is a reading of the codex Bartol.

28. *I saw a stair, on which the sunbeams play'd.*

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the Angels of God ascending and descending on it."—*Gen.* xxviii. 12.

> "The stairs were such as whereon Jacob saw
> Angels ascending and descending."
>
> *Par. Lost*, iii. 510.

43. *And one, which unto us remain'd the nearest.*

Pietro Damiano, (see line 121, and note.)

106. *'Twixt the two shores of Italy are found.*

i.e. "Betwixt the Tuscan Sea, and the Adriatic, rise the Appennines. Catria is now the Abbey of Santa Croce—the "cloister" (line 118) then wont "to send to heaven a plenteous harvest of souls."

121. *There Pietro Damiano was I hight.*

Bishop of Ostia. "He obtained," says Tiraboschi, "a great and well merited reputation by the pains he took to correct the abuses of the clergy." He here distinguishes himself from Pietro degli Onesti, surnamed "Il Peccator." He says the clergy in his time were so depraved, that he was reluctantly made a Cardinal.

137. *From step to step in circling form descend.*

i.e. "From step to step of the above mentioned stair."—*Costa.*

140. *Uttering a cry, that in mine ears so sounded.*

In this cry is shown the indignation of heaven against the vices of the Priests. (See note to next canto, line 1.)

CANTO XXII.

1. *Oppress'd with stupor, turn'd I to my guide.*

See note to last canto, line 140. Beatrice tells him that the shout he heard was the effect of righteous zeal: "As if she had said, you are in a place where there is nothing to be afraid of, but all is full of safety and holiness."—*Ottimo Commento.*

10. *Now judge what change in thee the song had wrought.*

See last canto, line 58. Beatrice adds (line 13,) that if Dante had understood the words uttered in the shout, he would have foreknown the vengeance impending upon the Priests.

28. *When lo, the largest and the loveliest.*

St. Benedict. He founded a monastery on the side of the Cassine mount (line 37,) and built an altar there to the true God, in place of an oracle of Apollo.

49. *Maccarius here, here Romoald.*

There were two celebrated Devotees of the name of Macarius. Romoaldo was a native of Ravenna, and founded the order of Camaldoli, in the tenth century.

70. *Whose summit did the Patriarch Jacob see.*

See note to xxi. 28.

79. *Not usury so thwarts the Almighty pleasure.*

See *Inf.* xi. 109. St. Benedict inveighs against the clergy for giving to relatives that which was entrusted to them for the poor; and adds (line 86,) that however excellent may be the conduct of any religious order at first, they degenerate in a few years, *i.e.* as soon as they acquire wealth.

91. *If thou reflect how each begins.*

Pietro Damiano is here spoken of, (see note, canto xxi. 121.) The change from white to dark (line 93,) is thus explained: "Reflect upon the pride, the wealth, and the arrogance to which the clergy are arrived, and you will see that the Christian virtues are changed into the opposite vices."—*Costa.*

94. *Jordan driven backward,—and the sea that fled.*

"The sea saw it and fled; Jordan was driven back."—*Psalm* cxiv. *i.e.* "If great miracles were performed in the former case, less miracles will not be denied in the present. God will preserve his saints against a corrupt and tyrannical priesthood.

112. *O glorious constellation! Light divine!*

The poet apostrophizes the Gemini, under whose influence he supposed himself born, when the sun was in that constellation.

123. *Befitting such an arduous enterprize.*

i.e. "The attempt to describe the empyrean, and the Holy Trinity."—*Lombardi.* By the "final resting place" is meant "the sight of God."

135. *I smiled, its mean aspect to recognize.*

"This is in order to point out the necessity of detaching oneself from earthly things in order to enjoy the delights of Paradise." —*Lombardi.* "Returning to the humble concerns of the present world, and all his engagements among perishing things, man feels their unsatisfying character, and learns to pass through them under the habitual impression that this is not his rest, nor here his portion."—*Abercrombie. Harmony of Christian Faith and Character.* Dante seems to have had Boethius in view:

> "Quicunque solam, mente præcipiti, petit
> Summumque credit, gloriam;
> Latè patentes ætheris cernat plagas,
> Arctumque terrarum situm."

141. *And led me to suppose her dense and rare.*

See canto ii. 60. His vision was so sharpened that he was able to look upon the Sun,—Hyperion being fabled to be the father of the Sun. Maia and Dione were respectively the mothers of Mercury and Venus, and their names are here used as synonymous for those planets. Jupiter is described as betwixt Mars and Saturn, his son and father.

CANTO XXIII.

11. ——— *her eyes unto that part directing.*

"The centre of the heavens—where by reason of the slow motion of the shadows, the sun appears to move slower."—*Cesari.* Lombardi says there is a reference to the celestial Jerusalem in the centre of heaven, antipodal to the terrestrial Jerusalem, in the centre of the earth.

26. *Diana smiles the eternal Nymphs among.*

Thus Drummond of Hawthornden calls the stars

"Those starry Nymphs which dance about the pole."

Mr. Cary also quotes Euripides. *Supp.* 995.

ὦ ἀκυθόαι νύμφαι
Ἱππείνοι δι ὄρφναίας.

29. *A single Sun, that lit up all the throng.*

This Sun is our Saviour—also called "the irradiate Substance," and (line 37) "the Wisdom and the Power."

34. *O Beatrice, most sweet and precious guide!*

"This is not a call to Beatrice, but an exclamation."—*Landino.*

65. *And that by mortal shoulder 'tis sustain'd.*

"Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam
Viribus: et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
Quid valeant humeri." *Horace. De Arte Poet.*

The simile that follows is a renewal of the metaphor adopted at the opening of the second canto, where see note.

73. *Here is the Rose in which the Word Divine.*

The Rose is the Virgin Mary.—The Lilies are Saints, in allusion to Ecclesiasticus, (xxxix. 14.)

79. *As by the sun's pure beam, direct convey'd.*

This most beautiful simile illustrates the manner in which our Saviour, unseen himself, irradiated the Saints beneath him. In the apostrophe that follows (line 85,) our Saviour is lauded by the poet for withdrawing the brightness of His presence, in order that he might be able to discern the beatified spirits.

88. *The name of that fair flower, which morn and night.*

"After the digression occasioned by his apostrophe, the poet returns to the narrative, and relates that the name of Mary (the Rose) which he invoked morning and evening, prompted him to look for her,—well knowing, that our Saviour being withdrawn, she must be the "greatest light," among the remaining Spirits."—*Lombardi.*

94. *A little torch within this heaven came down.*

This torch is the Angel Gabriel, who revolves around the star, *i.e.* the Virgin, crowning her, as it were, with the lustre of his glory. (see line 119.)

100. *Compared in tone with that angelic lyre.*

The "angelic lyre" is the same with "the torch," viz. the Angel Gabriel; who proceeds to sing, "I am angelic love;" *i.e.* "I represent the love of the Angels, and testify the joy they felt at the

Incarnation." The description of the firmament is of the same character as that brilliant passage in the Purgatorio (canto i. 13,)

" Dolce color d' oriental zaphiro
Che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto
Dell' aer puro infin al primo giro
Agli occhi miei ricominciò diletto."

112. *The mantle that its royal covering throws.*

The mantle, which envelopes the other eight volumes, or spheres, is the ninth heaven, the immoveable empyrean or primum mobile, (see note, ii. 112.) The meaning is, that Dante being still in the eighth heaven, which interposed between him and the transparent empyrean, could not follow thither with his eyes the " encircled flame," *i.e.* the Virgin circled by the Angel Gabriel, who was ascending in the steps of her divine Son. (lines 95, 107, 120.)

128. *Chanting 'Regina Cœli.'*

" The beginning of an anthem sung by the Church to the Virgin during Easter."—*Volpi.*

135. *During their exile, where they left the gold.*

Translated according to the reading " dove si lascia l'oro," approved by Parenti, who does not agree with Lombardi in referring this terzet, together with the remaining four lines, to St. Peter. " He says that in heaven they live on that celestial bread which the Saints have acquired in the tribulations of the world."—*Ottimo Commento.*

CANTO XXIV.

1. *O ye, elected to the banquet high.*

Beatrice speaks, addressing the elect, and interceding for Dante. The banquet is that mentioned in the Revelations, (xix. 9.) "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

17. *According to their several shares of love.*

Thus (canto iv. 35) the Spirits were said to "taste the sweet existence diversely;" and (viii. 20) to "circle with more or less celerity," in proportion to the grace they had severally received.

28. *"O holy sister, thy impassion'd prayer.*

St. Peter answers Beatrice, his sister in glory.

46. *His armour as the bachelor puts on.*

"The bachelor, or disputant in the schools, arms or prepares himself to discuss the question proposed by the master, whose office it is to close it."—*Vellutello.* The master pledges himself that the thing is true, and that he will prove it, if the bachelor fails.

62. *By thy dear brother's pen unerring.*

St. Paul is here spoken of as the brother of St. Peter; and his words adopted—"Now faith is the substance," &c. (*Heb.* xi. 1.)

85. *But is it in thy purse?*

i.e. "Have you this faith in your heart."—*Venturi.*

96. *Each other demonstration weak and dull.*

"There are such powerful evidences of the truth of the doctrines of Christ by the effectual workings of the spirit of God upon their souls, that all other arguments as to their own satisfaction may fall short of these. As to which, those verses of the poet Dante are very pertinent and significant," &c.—*Stillingfleet. Or. Sac.* B. ii. c. 9. Quoted by Cary .

100. *The works that follow'd, proof sufficient bear.*

i.e. Miracles—in which Nature has no part.

106. *If without miracles the world was brought.*

"We cannot conceive how the world should be at first induced to believe without manifest and uncontroled miracles: for as St. Chrysostom speaks, *εἰ σημειών χωρὶς ἔπεισαν, πολλῷ μειζον το θαυμα φαινεται.* 'It were the greatest miracle of all, if the world should believe without miracles;' which the poet Dante hath well expressed in the twenty-fourth canto of Paradise."—*Stillingfleet. Or. Sac.* B. ii. c. x. sect. 5. (Quoted by Cary.) By the "tree" (line 110) is meant the faith which in primitive times produced good fruit, but is now degenerated to a barren stock.

115. *And that great Chieftain.*

"Il gran Barone," *i.e.* St. Peter. The same title is applied to St. James in the next canto.

126. *Outstripping younger feet.*

St. John arrived first at the sepulchre, but St. Peter was the first to look in, which Dante considers a proof of greater faith.

" Dicit enim Johannes ipsum," (*i.e.* Petrum,) " introivisse subito, cum venit in monumentum, videns alium discipulum cunctantem ad ostium."—*Dante. De Monarchiâ.* B. iii.

141. *They equally admit of sunt and est.*

i.e. Of singular and plural.

153. *Thrice, chaunting loud, encircled me, and bless'd.*

" Does he not here represent the rite of the imposition of hands, and consecration to apostolical office, though he wished not to declare it openly ?"—*Ugo Foscolo. Disc.* p. 80. The allusion, Foscolo adds, is to St. Paul, (1 *Tim.* iv. 14.) " Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

CANTO XXV.

1. *Should it befal that e'er the sacred lay.*

"Even in the presence of Beatrice and St. Peter, he thus unbosoms the long cherish'd hope; conscious of high desert, as well as grievous injustice, which he would nevertheless most fervently forgive, could restoration to his country be obtained on terms consistent with the fame and honour of Dante."—*James Montgomery. Life of Dante. Lardner's Cab. Cyclop.* No. 63. The fair sheepfold (line 5) is Florence, Dante's birth-place. He contrasts his own peaceful disposition with the violence of his countrymen; and the scornful voices that banished him, with the acclamations he anticipates on his return as a Poet. After fifteen years exile, overtures were made to Dante to return to Florence upon conditions which he could not accept. His answer is extant in a letter, of modern discovery, preserved in the Laurentian library. "No, my father, this is not the way of returning to my country. Yet if you or any one else can find another which shall not compromise the fame and honour of Dante, I will not be slow to take it. But if by such an one, I may not return to Florence—Florence I will never enter. What then! may I not every where behold the sun and the stars? Can I not every where under heaven meditate on the most delightful truths, without first rendering myself inglorious, aye infamous, before the people and city of Florence—and this for fear I should want bread?"

7. *With other voice, with other fleece shall I.*

"These verses unite the pagan ceremony of crowning with the laurel to that of baptism, and the images of Virgil to the expressions of St. Paul, 'Ipse caput tonsæ foliis ornatus olivæ,' (*Georg.* iii. 10.) 'If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not

crowned, except he strive lawfully.' (2 Tim. ii. 5.) It appears to me evident that Dante adjudged himself the crown, expecting it, not from the applause, neither from the pardon of the Florentines, nor the judgment of any man; but from the divine decree, through the legitimate authority of his mission, and the merit of having warred against the harlot church."—*Ugo Foscolo. Discorso* p. 89. "Certainly his object would have been obtained, if fortune had ever destined his return to Florence, where in the font of St. John he received his first name, and would fain have received a second by means of a coronation."—*Boccaccio. Life of Dante.*

12. *Hence Peter waved his hands around my brow.*

See conclusion of last canto, line 151. This heavenly benediction of the poet by St. Peter, accompanied by laying on of hands, should be borne in mind, as immediately preceding his designation of the Divina Commedia as a "sacred poem." From the band of the Apostles, whence St. Peter (the first Vicar of Christ) came to Dante in the last canto, now came St. James. When his sepulchre was discovered at Compostella in Galicia, numbers flocked to it from all parts of the world.

22. *So these great heirs of immortality.*

St. Peter and St. James.—The affection of Doves has before furnished Dante with a beautiful simile. (*Inf.* v. 82.)

> "As Doves by strong affection urged, repair
> With firm expanded wings to their sweet nest,
> Borne by the impulse of their will through air."

29. *"O glorious soul, by whom the riches stow'd.*

This is addressed to St. James, who in his Epistles shows the riches of God: "If any of you lack wisdom," &c.; and again,

" Every good and every perfect gift," &c. (1 v. 17.) " St. James is requested to make the name of Hope for once heard in this high region, where, since every desire is satisfied, this virtue has no place. The poet assumes that as often as Christ admitted to the manifestations of his Divinity these three disciples only, the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, were represented by St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, respectively."—*Lombardi.* " The answer, 'Lift up thy head,' is addressed to the poet by St. James. He says, that every mortal who ascends on high, must endure the effulgence of the Saints, ere he pass into the presence of the Sun of suns."—*Ottimo Commento.* (see canto xxx. 54.) Receiving this encouragement, Dante " lifts up his eyes unto the hills whence cometh his help." (*Psalm* cxxi. 1.)

44. *The hope that e'en on earth awakens love.*

i e. The hope that hath God for its object.

52. " *No child hath the Church militant.*

His own praises Dante puts into the mouth of Beatrice, " that pitying one."—By reason of his hope Dante is allowed " a passage from Egypt to Jerusalem," *i.e.* " from earth to Paradise," ere the term of his earthly warfare be ended.

67. " *Hope,*" *said I,* " *is an expectation sure.*

" Est spes certa expectatio futuræ beatitudinis veniens ex Dei gratiâ, et meritis precedentibus."—*Petrus Lombardus;* from whom the definition is taken. " Christi solius meritis " it should have been; and Dante himself seems to have qualified this gross Popish error, when he afterwards says, " 'Tis counted merit when we grace receive." (canto xxix. 66.) The third question (line 47) is next answered. " The sacred writers are called " Stars," in allusion to Daniel, (cap. xii.) 'They that turn many to righteousness

shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.'"—*Lombardi.* The Psalm alluded to, (line 73,) is the ninth, verse 10. "They that know thy name will put their trust in Thee." To St. James himself, he was next indebted, whose epistle, he says, teems with the language of David.

80. *From out the living breast of that bright fire.*

"Living"—because within that fire was concealed the spirit of the holy Apostle St. James; and it quivered, to signify applause at the answer that was made."—*Lombardi.*

91. *Isaiah says that in their native land.*

"In their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them."..." He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness." (*Isaiah* lxi. 7, 10.) The text next alluded to is from St. John, the "brother" of St. James. (*Rev.* vii. 9.)

98. ——— "*My hope in Thee.*"

The exclamation of the Saints on hearing the mention of the white robes—*i.e.* of the glorified bodies, which they eagerly desire.

101. *A star so bright,—had Cancer such an one.*

The spirit of St. John—whose light was like that of the Sun.—"If a luminary like that which now appeared were to shine throughout the month following the winter solstice, during which the constellation Cancer appears in the east at the setting of the Sun, there would be no interruption to the light, but the whole month would be as a single day."—*Cary.*

103. *And as a virgin, rising joyously.*

St. John is described as doing honour to Beatrice, who is repre-represented as a Bride, by accompanying St. Peter and St. James both in the dance, and in the words and notes of their song.

113. *Of our great Pelican.*

Our Saviour is emphatically called "Our Pelican," because he continually feeds us with his own blood. Hence Drummond of Hawthornden, who had studied Dante, uses the same metaphor in his hymn on the Passion. He who lay on our Saviour's bosom is St. John, to whose care Jesus gave his mother. (*John* xix. 37.)

117. *Than erst she did before she spoke to me.*

Beatrice knew for certainty whether St. John were there in the body or in spirit only. Dante, on the contrary, views St. John with great curiosity—doubts having been raised in his mind, as in that of the disciples, by the saying of our Saviour with regard to him: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (*St. John* xxi. 22.) This the Evangelist proceeds to solve, line 124.

127. *In the blest cloister, with the garments twain.*

Lombardi explains these to be—one a glorification of the soul, the other of the body; which the elect will receive after the resurrection, but with which our Saviour and the Virgin are already invested.—These are the two lights now dwelling "in the blest cloister," *i.e.* in the empyrean or highest heaven; and described, canto xxiii. 86, 120, as mounting above out of Dante's sight.

CANTO XXVI.

1. *While I with dazzled eyes, in doubt remain'd.*

Dazzled with the contemplation of St. John, at the end of the last canto, the poet is in doubt whether he shall ever recover his sight, and see Beatrice again. The Apostle tells him that the look of Beatrice has the same power as the hand of Ananias, which restored St. Paul's sight.

17. *Is unto me the first as well as last.*

i.e. The Alpha and the Omega. (*Rev.* i. 8, 11.) The voice that presently speaks is that of St. John.

25. *Then I: "By what Philosophy hath taught.*

The poet replies that he was first led to the love of God by Natural Philosophy, and secondly by Revelation. He places the study of Nature before that of Revelation—not as more important, but as prior in point of time. If a child is unable to comprehend the mysteries of the Gospel, he can readily understand the goodness of God as displayed in the book of Nature.

38. *By him who the first love to me displays.*

Plato is here intended. The words of God to Moses, (line 42) are from Exodus, (xxxiii. 19) "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." In the next stanza, the first chapter of St. John is referred to.

52. *Why Christ's blest Eagle this enquiry made.*

"St. John is represented under the figure of an Eagle, because, as this bird flies higher than all others, and can bear the light of the sun without being dazzled, so St. John surpassed all others in describing the Divinity of Christ."—*Landino.*

62. *Have drawn me from the sea of erring love.*

i.e. "From the miseries and troubles a man suffers through excessive love of worldly objects."—*Landino.* The expression is from Scripture: "The wicked are like the troubled sea," &c. and is adopted in the Inferno, i. 23, and ii. 107, where Dante is described as combating death upon this sea. The plants that adorn the garden of God (line 64) are the Saints in Paradise.

77. *Dash'd by a ray from those of Beatrice.*

The vision ends, and Dante's sight is restored, as St. John said it would be (line 10) by a look from Beatrice. On recovering his sight he perceives that a fourth spirit has join'd the party.

93. *To whom is daughter both by law and birth.*

Daughter of Adam, as the common father; and also his daughter in law, as married to one of his sons.

115. *'Twas not alone through tasting of the tree.*

"The sin of Adam consisted not in his eating a particular fruit, but in disobeying God....It was enough to teach them that obedience to God was an imperative duty; and they were told that disobedience would be followed by death."—*Dr. E. Burton. Works,* vol. i. p. 346.

118. *There, whence thy faithful Lady Virgil drew.*

In Limbo. (see *Inf.* ii. 52.) From 5232 (the years from the creation to the death of our Saviour) deduct 930, the number Adam lived, (line 123) and there remains 4302, the period Adam says he was in Limbo before our Saviour rescued him. Such calculations are, it must be confessed, very grave triflings.

127. *For no effect by human reason wrought.*

See similar passages in note to xvi. 79.

133. *Ere I descended to the gulf of hell.*

i.e. To Limbo. (see *Inf.* iv. 55, and note.)

138. *Is like the leaf—one comes, another goes.*

" Ut sylvæ foliis pronos mutantur in annos,
Prima cadunt: ita verborum vetus interit ætas."
Horace. De Arte Poet.

The mountain (line 109) is that of Purgatory, upon which was situated the terrestrial Paradise—and where an obscure tradition supposes our first Parents to have remained only a few hours.

CANTO XXVII.

1. *" Glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost !"*

This hymn is sung at the conclusion of Dante's examination by the Apostles. " This scene and the discourse of St. Peter, if it was all that remained of the whole work, would suffice to render it deserving the name of the greatest of poems."—*Ugo Foscolo, Disc.* p. 386.

7. *O bliss ineffable ! O rapture pure !*

" O gioia ! o ineffabile allegrezza !
O vita intera d' amore e di pace !
O senza brama sicura ricchezza !

10. *Stood the four torches burning in my sight.*

St. Peter, St. James, St. John, and Adam. " St. Peter hitherto shone with a clear and agreeable light, like the planet Jupiter, but now, through indignation, becomes red and inflamed like the planet Mars."—*Venturi.* (See next note.) So Milton, *Par. Lost.* iv. 979 :

" While thus he spake th' angelic squadron bright
Turn'd fiery red," &c.

21. *E'en while I speak will all the choir you view.*

God himself has silenced the heavenly choir, who remain listening, while St. Peter addresses Dante. " And here he directs his indignation against Boniface, who by simony was elected Pope in 1294. And he repeats three times ' my place ' to show how inflamed he was against him. And he says that the said place, *i.e.*

the papal seat, is vacant in the sight of God, because the election of Boniface was not legitimate."—*Ottimo Commento.* Of Boniface, see note, *Inf.* xix. 77. By the " burial ground " of St. Peter (line 25) is meant the city of Rome. Heaven shows its sympathy with him (line 30) by glowing with indignation, and an eclipse follows, such as took place at the death of our Saviour.

40. *The spouse of Christ was nourish'd not of old.*

i.e. " The Church was not nourished by my blood, and that of other papal martyrs, in order to encourage it in avaricious pursuits —nor that Bishops abandoning their character, like Boniface, should set up their standards as factious chieftains, and siding with the Guelfs, treat the Ghibellines with indignity." This is expressed by the allusion to the sheep and the goats. *Matt.* xxv. 32.

53. *Attached to lying privileges sold.*

Dante here reprobates Bulls and Indulgences; and proceeds to identify the Popes with the impostors described by our Saviour: " Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves." (*Matthew* vii. 15.) Whence Milton, (*Par. Lost,* xii. 508) " Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves." By the " fair pastures " (line 56) are meant Bishopricks and Churches. The Popes alluded to afterwards are Clement V. a Gascon, and John XXII. of Cahors, of whom see note, *Inf.* xix. 82.

63. *Shall soon, I deem, a powerful aid be brought.*

i.e. Through the instrumentality of the Emperor Henry VIII.; or, according to Lombardi, of Can Grande. (See note, *Inf.* i. 101, and *Par.* xvii. 76.)

67. *As vapours through our atmosphere descending.*

"St. Peter has finished his speech; and immediately the immense crowd of splendours who had descended with Christ, and remained below, mount aloft like a shower of snow."—*Biagioli.* These "triumphant vapours" are the "triumphal crew," mentioned xxii. 131.

82. *So that I kenn'd Ulysses' track, beyond.*

See *Inf.* xxvi. 103. The shore whence Jove bore Europa is Phœnicia.

98. *Bore me from Leda's beauteous nest away.*

The Gemini—Leda being the mother of Castor and Pollux. The "swiftest heaven," to which Dante is now carried, is the ninth; or primum mobile.

100. *Whose liveliest and most lofty regions were.*

The uniformity of the highest sphere is remarkable, as intended to convey an idea of God's presence levelling all distinctions of time and place. Thus, "God alone was to be seen in heaven." The "desire" which Beatrice speaks of (line 103) is, to understand the properties of the ninth heaven. The explanation follows, (line 106.) "The nature of the circular motion, or primum mobile, which sphere gives motion to all the rest, has here its origin. And this heaven is identified with the Divine Mind, wherein is kindled that love which gives motion to the universe."

118. *How in such vessel Time its roots receives.*

"Here," says Beatrice, "are the roots, whence Time springs. As for the parts into which it is divided, the other heavens must

be considered. And she then breaks into an exclamation on the degeneracy of human nature, which does not lift itself to the contemplation of heavenly things."—*Cary.* "Exclamat contra omnes qui propter cupiditatem temporalium perdunt eterna."—*Il P. C.*

125. *But through continual beating of the rain.*

i.e. The continual assault of earthly cares and pleasures.

138. *The morning, when he quits the shades of night.*

The day is called the "daughter of the Sun." "Beautiful as is her dawn, her face is often soon clouded over;—so many, who promise well in the morning of life, lose their innocence amid the temptations of the world."—*Abp. Leighton.* The evils he complains of are owing, he says, to the misconduct of the Pope, who neglects his duty as "Governor." The remedy is expected, he adds, in the changes to be wrought by Can Grande. (See note, line 63.)

142. *But ere that January be no more*
A winter month.

i.e. In a short space of time. The allusion is to the error in the Julian reckoning of the year, which in the course of 100 years amounting to a whole day, at last caused a necessity of correcting the calendar, as effected by Gregory XIII. The reform he contemplates is described by various metaphors. The vessel of the state will advance before a prosperous gale; and the "buds of promise" (mentioned line 124) shall no more be blighted, but ripen into fruit.

CANTO XXVIII.

1. *When she who doth my soul imparadise.*

"Imparadisa la mia mente;" *i.e.* "Who raises my soul to the contemplation of heavenly things."—*Ottimo Commento.* Hence Milton: "Imparadised in one another's arms."

11. *Looking a second time on those fair eyes.*

In the eyes of Beatrice he saw as in a mirror that representation of God, which on turning round, he saw in reality. "By the eyes of Beatrice are meant the mirror of theological truth."—*Ottimo Commento.* In the last canto Beatrice had enlarged on the wretchedness of mankind; and to this description Dante now alludes. The "volume" (line 14) means the ninth heaven in which Dante now was. (See canto xxiii. 112.)

16. *I saw a Point.*

A few days before his death Payson said to his wife, "Hitherto I have viewed God as a fixed star, bright indeed, but often intercepted by clouds, but now He is coming nearer and nearer, and spreads into a sun so vast and glorious that the sight is too dazzling for flesh and blood to sustain."

22. *Distant—as far perhaps as from the light.*

Around this Point, at the distance that the halo, formed by vapours, is from the moon, the Angels move in nine circles of fire, corresponding to the nine heavens. (See note, line 66.) The "swiftest motion" (line 27) is that of the ninth heaven.

32. ———— *not Juno's messenger.*

Iris, or the rainbow.

42. *Heaven and all Nature on that Point depend.*

" Εκ τοιαύτης ἄρα ἀρχῆς ἤρτηται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις."
Aristotle. Met. vii. 7.

53. *In this most wondrous and angelic fane.*

The ninth heaven—next to the empyrean, or seat of the blessed, consisting of light and love. (See canto xxvii. 112.)

64. *The heavenly circles vary in their size.*

i.e. " Since the material heavens," or " heavenly circles," vary in their size,—the largest heaven, or primum mobile, must necessarily be identified with the Intelligences, which are nearest God, and abound most in wisdom and love, *i.e.* with the Seraphim: and so on. If, therefore, (line 73) you judge by the endowments of the Angels, and not by the size of the circles, (' the substances that circling are descried ') you will find a wonderful conformity between each of the nine heavens and their respective Intelligences, or nine orders of Angelic Directors."

89. *The circles shot forth sparks, like those arising.*

The nine circles of Angels.

92. *In number unto millions more than e'en.*

" Let us look upward and view the heavenly regions above us, where millions of millions of holy Angels dwell. There the king-

dom of God is in its glory: there virtue shines in its full lustre and brightness."—*Bp. Bull.* (See note, xxix. 133.)

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep:
> All these with ceaseless praise, his work behold
> Both day and night." *Milton. Par. Lost*, iv. 677.

106. *And thou should'st know, they all enjoyment find.*

"Beatrice says, that each of them abounds in love, in glory, and in happiness, in proportion to their knowledge of God, who is the final end and resting place of the intellect."—*Ottimo Commento.* "Hence Dante proceeds (line 109) to solve the scholastic question, In quo consistit beatitudo formalis; an in visione an in amore?"—*Lombardi.* The love of God, he says, follows, does not precede, the knowledge of Him, according to the Scripture: "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (*Heb.* xi. 6.) "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 *John* iv. 19.)

115. *The ensuing Hierarchy, blooming ever*
In this abode of sempiternal spring.

Where the bloom of spring is not blighted, as on earth, in autumn, when Aries rises at sunset.

> "From hence we mount aloft unto the sky
> And look into the crystal firmament;
> There we behold the heaven's great Hierarchy,
> The star's pure light, and sphere's swift movement,
> The spirits and Intelligences fair,
> And Angels waiting on the Almighty's chair."
> *Spencer. Tears of the Muses. Urania.*

130. *With such desire did Dionysius try.*

See canto x. 115, and note. "About the end of the fourth century, there came forth a book under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, the convert and disciple of St. Paul, (*Acts* xvii. 34) entituled: 'Concerning the Celestial Hierarchy,'—wherein the Author speaks so sublimely, so punctually, with so much assurance of the things above, as if he had himself surveyed the heavenly mansions; and, as a learned man expresses it, taken an exact inventory of all that is there....Afterwards the schoolmen and others of the Church of Rome, taking the book to be really his, whose name it bears, received all the groundless conjectures therein as very truths....The theme of the angelical ministry is indeed very pregnant, and hath administered abundant matter to exercise the more curious wits, who have raised very many questions about it, of more subtlety than profit....Wherefore others, out of a dread and abhorrence of such presumption, have run themselves into a contrary extreme, and can scarce endure any professed discourse of Angels, or let it pass without the censure of vain and dangerous curiosity."—*Bp. Bull. Serm.* xi. 12. Of this excellent Prelate (Bp. Bull) it is recorded, that the friend who attended his bedside a short time before his death, having observed him in a state of abstraction, asked him on what subject his thoughts were fixed; he answered; "that he was meditating the number and nature of Angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven—and oh! that it might be so on earth."

CANTO XXIX.

1. *Long as Latona's double progeny.*

Apollo and Diana.—These names are synonymous with the sun and moon. "As short a space as the sun and moon are in changing hemispheres, when they are opposite to one another, the one under the sign of Aries, and the other under that of Libra, and both hang for a moment, poised as it were in the hand of the zenith."—*Cary.*

12. *In which are present every when and where.*

i.e. All times and places. Here follows the answer to Dante's unexpressed desire (line 10) to know when, where, and how the Angels were created. (See note, line 48.)

21. *The Holy Spirit moved upon this deep.*

i.e. Upon the unformed mass of the universe."—*Volpi.* Before "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" there was no before or after,—*i.e.* no division or succession of time.—"Simple and unmixed form answers to pure intelligence (puro atto,) the highest of created being; simple and unmixed substance to 'mere power' (pura potenzia,) the lowest; and form, mixed with substance, to intelligence and power (potenzia con atto,) that which holds the middle space between the other two."—*Cary.* Thus in these and the following lines are described, *First,* Angels.—*Secondly,* Animal Creation.—*Thirdly,* Matter.

40. *But the account I have inserted here.*

i.e. That Angels were created at the same time with the material world, in contradiction to St. Jerome.

48. *And when they were created first, and how.*

i.e. First, "In his Eternity."—*Secondly,* "Before Time began."—*Thirdly,* "At one unerring act."

55. *The pride of him, whom thou hast seen with all.*

Lucifer.—(See *Inf.* xxxiv. 121.) "It seemeth that there was no other way for Angels to sin, but by reflex of their understanding upon themselves; when being held with admiration of their own sublimity and honour, the memory of their subordination unto God, and their dependency on him, was drowned in this conceit....The fall of Angels therefore was Pride."—*Hooker. Eccl. Pol.* i. 4.

70. *But in your schools since such is said to be.*

"As the glorified souls—so the blessed Angels have their heights of excellency and glory....He that was rapt in the third heaven can tell us of Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Angels and Archangels in that region of blessedness....But what their several ranks, offices, and employments are, he were not more wise that could tell, than he is bold that dare speak....It is enough for me to rest in the hope that I shall one day see them...in the mean while let me be learnedly ignorant, and incuriously devout, silently blessing the power and wisdom of my infinite Creator, who knows how to honour himself by all these glorious and unrevealed subordinations."—*Bp. Hall. Contemplations.* Sect. vii. (See note to last canto, line 130.)

80. ——————— *their's no necessity*
Transactions past by memory to renew.

"The poet denies not that the Angels are endued with memory, intellect, and will; but attributes to these powers a far greater perfection than we possess."—*Venturi.*

103. *Lapi and Bindi not so numerous are.*

i.e. Rogues and traitors.—"Un Lapo Salterello" is thus mentioned, canto xv. 128. The ensuing stanza seems to have been imitated by Milton, as quoted by Mr. Cary.

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly." *Lycidas.*

111. *But: 'Testify the truth to every nation.'*

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."—*Mark* xvi. 15. "Putting on the armour of salvation, they fought the good fight," &c.—*Heb.* xi. 34. Hence the metaphor of "the shields and lances."

118. *But in that cowl such bird doth build its nest.*

In Scripture the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove; so here the evil spirit is represented as a bird, so black, that could the people see him as he really is, they would know what are the indulgences on which they blindly rely. In these and the following lines, which show Dante to be any thing but a Papist, (see Introd. to the Purg.) he alludes to Boniface VIII., whose pardons and indulgences he openly denounced. (See xxvii. 53, and note.)

124. *Fattens his hog on these, St. Anthony.*

St. Anthony is painted with a pig at his feet as a symbol of the devil, whom he vanquished. St. Anthony represents the Church —the pig the greedy simoniacal priests fattening upon luxuries extorted from the credulous people, and paid for in "uncoined money," or fictitious coin, *i.e.* in indulgences.

133. *And if thou mark'st what Daniel hath reveal'd.*

"Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him."—*Daniel* vii. 10.

142. *Since then so multiplied the Mirrors are.*

God is represented as a Mirror, which by an act of love, He voluntarily breaks into ten thousand pieces, each reflecting an image of Himself, and yet not in the least injuring His own Unity. "It was the goodness of God, being self-sufficient, and from eternal ages happy in Himself, that moved Him in that point of duration which his infinite wisdom saw most fitting, as it were to go forth and down from himself, and to give being to very many things, and to communicate his goodness to each of them in such degrees as the same his infinite wisdom was pleased to assign, and from the same goodness whereby he created things, he still preserves them, provides for them, and takes care of them."—*Bishop Bull. Serm.* xix.

CANTO XXX.

10. *E'en so the triumph, ever dancing round.*

"He compares the vanishing of the vision to the fading away of the stars at dawn, when it is noonday six thousand miles off; and the shadow, formed by the earth over the part of it inhabited by the poet, is about to disappear."—*Cary.* The "triumph" (line 10) means the triumphant angelic hosts before mentioned. These, dancing around the throne, appear to encompass the Deity, whereas they are in truth encompassed by Him.

19. *Beauty I saw transcending human sense.*

"To understand why God alone is fully able to enjoy this sight, it is sufficient to reflect that Beatrice is the symbol of Wisdom, by whom God made the world."—*Biagioli.*

40. *Light intellectual, and full of love!*

Luce intellettual piena d'amore,
Amor di vero ben, pien di letizia,
Letizia, che trascende ogni dolzore.

This highly wrought stanza is a very Paradise in itself: and well might Lord Byron declare: "Dante's Heaven is all love, and glory, and majesty."—*Moore's Life—Byron's Works*, vol. v. p. 93. Into this abode of pure light—derived immediately from God himself—*i.e.* the empyrean, Dante ascended from "the vast celestial zone," *i.e.* from the Primum Mobile, which encircles the other heavens. Here he is told he shall see "the twofold bands of Paradise," *i.e.* of Angels and of Saints. "It was not in scattered sounds that the whole magnificence of that idea could be manifested, which represents love as at once the base and pyramidal point of the entire universe; teaches us to regard the earthly union

of souls, not as a thing accidental, transitory, and dependent on the condition of human society, but with far higher import, as the best appointed symbol of relations with God, and through them of his own ineffable essence. In the Divine Comedy this idea received its full completeness of form; that wonderful work, of which to speak adequately we must borrow the utterance of its conceiving mind—' La gloria di colui,' &c. (canto i. 11.")—*Remains in Verse and Prose of Henry Arthur Hallam.*

52. *The Love, that calms this tranquil heaven.*

These are the words of Beatrice, comforting Dante by the assurance, that God, who is ever dispensing his grace to those who come within its sphere, is now calming his soul with heavenly love, and preparing him to sustain the brightness of his glory. " The verification of this one statement of internal beatitude would not only raise the soul infallibly above the storms and tempests of this lower world, but would imply an anticipation of Paradise—a solid and undelusive commencement of the very heaven of heavens in the mind and heart."—*Alex. Knox. Postscript to Treatise on the Eucharist.*

61. *Light I beheld, that like a stream was flowing.*

The following description of the River of Life, and of the Angels and Saints ascending and descending upon it, is one of the most beautiful in the Divina Commedia. " And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb."—*Rev.* xxii. 1. (See note to line 40.)

76. *Then added: " Know, the stream, and Topazes.*

The Topazes are the same as the Sparks: (lines 64, 94.) The real objects which the Sparks and Flowers symbolically represent are now unfolded; and in the light emanating from God Angels and Saints are revealed.

90. *Instead of long, as lately it appear'd.*

"In its length was represented the outpouring of God among his creatures—in its roundness the return of that outpouring to God, as to its original source and ultimate end."—*Venturi.*

97. *O splendour of the Godhead, by whose aid.*

In order to mark the distinctness with which Paradise was revealed to him, the poet repeats "vidi" three times as an identical rhyme, exclaiming in rapture; "O isplendor di Dio," &c. Such licences in the Italian are not however to be imitated in English, even in a translation, unless there be a nodus vindice dignus, as in canto xii. 75, where see note.

102. *In seeing Him alone can find repose.*

The boundlessness of Divine Grace is represented by the circular stream of light (lines 89, 103) encompassing the sun, and reflected to the ninth heaven. "His spirit is conveyed into our's—a beam of Himself, as of the sun. This Sun of Righteousness is not seen but by his own light."—*Abp. Leighton.* (See *Purg.* xv. 67.)

109. *And as a cliff looks down upon the bed.*

"E, come clivo in acqua di suo imo
Si specchia, quasi per vedersi adorno
Quanto e nell' erbe e ne' fioretti opimo."

The poet bodies forth an immense amphitheatre—from which the Saints, arrayed like the leaves of a full blown white rose, and seated on thrones, are beholding themselves in the mirror of God's countenance, and enjoying the fulness of light and grace. Angels are passing to and fro among the Saints, who are clad in white robes according to the vision of St. John, (vii. 13;) and in the centre are those who are styled (line 124) "the yellow of the rose."

130. *See how extensive is our City.*

The heavenly Jerusalem.—(See *Purg.* xxxii. 100, and note.) "In the mention of 'the little remaining room,' he alludes to the near approach of the day of judgment."—*Venturi.*

135. *Ere to this marriage supper thou sit down.*

"You shall enter into the great marriage supper of the Lamb, when faith shall end in sight, and hope in possession, and love continue in perpetual and full enjoyment."—*Archbishop Leighton. Serm.* viii. "The perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer, put upon him as a glorious dress,—as a wedding garment,—in which he may appear without shame among Angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; and sit down without fear of being thrust out at the marriage supper of the Lamb."—*Memoirs of Cornelius Neale. Serm.* i.—A most excellent and interesting work

138. *But ill disposed for regulations new.*

Of the Emperor Henry VII., Count of Luxemburgh, Dante formed high expectations, which were cut off by his early death. (See note, *Purg.* xxxiii. 43.) Dante proceeds to condemn the factious Guelfs for driving him away (line 141) when he wished to restore them to liberty. "At this time," he adds, "such a one shall be Pontiff, who will oppose the Emperor both openly and secretly, since he will endeavour to corrupt Italy and hold it in discord. This is Clement....He shall be thrust down into hell, where the Simoniacs are placed in circular holes with their heads down and feet up."—*Landino.* See *Inf.* xix. 84, where Boniface, (quel d' Alagna) it is prophesied, shall be thrust down still lower on the arrival of Clement.

CANTO XXXI.

2. *Was thus the sacred band to me display'd.*

i.e. The beatified spirits; who were compared in the last canto to the leaves of a white rose. Among these another band of winged beings, viz. Angels, are seen ascending and descending.—From the activity and industry of these winged messengers in speeding the intercourse of God with the Saints, they are now compared to bees. Dante had in mind the pictures of Horace and Virgil: "Ego apis Matinæ more modoque Grata carpentis thyma," &c. (iv. *Od.* 2. 27.) "Qualis apes æstate novâ per florea rura," &c. (*Æn.* i. 430.) "Ac veluti in pratis ubi apes æstate serenâ Floribus insidunt variis," &c. (*Æn.* vi. 707.) So the two Latin poets had Homer before them: "Ηὔτε ἔθνεα εἰσι μελισσάων ἀδινάων," &c. (*Il.* ii. 87.) Milton might cull from all. (*Par. Lost*, i. 768.) The "sacred band" of Saints are called the "Spouse" of Christ, in conformity with the language of Scripture; and thus in the Purgatorio (xxiii. 81) we are said by repentance to be "re-espoused to God."

13. *The looks of all were bright with living flame.*

The ardour of the living flame denotes their charity; the snow-like whiteness their purity; the fanning of their wings their active benevolence.

20. *Betwixt the Flower and Fountain of their bliss.*

The expression, "Fountain of their bliss," is an accidental coincidence with that used by Bishop Bull at the conclusion of a passage too beautiful to omit: "Among the blessed in heaven

there shall be no discontent or repining, no pride or disdain, no grudging or envy; but there shall be all contentment, all joy, all thankfulness, all love. They that are seated in the higher mansions of glory shall not look down with contempt on those that are beneath them; nor shall these lift up an envious eye towards the other; but they shall perfectly love and delight in each other: and by an inexpressible union of sublimated charity each shall make what the other enjoys his own, and all together shall make up in different notes one sweet harmonious concert in the praises of God, the *Fountain of their bliss.*" (*Serm.* vii.)

25. *In this blest realm where spirits of ancient days.*

The " spirits of ancient and modern days " are the twofold band before mentioned, viz. Angels and Saints. The eyes of both are fixed on Christ.

30. *Look down and see the storm in which we are.*

i.e. The distress of Italy—tost like a vessel in a tempest (as described *Purg.* vi. 77.) That Florence is particularly alluded to, is evident from line 39. Thus we find that amid his highest flights Dante is constantly recurring to his beloved country. (See note, xxv. 1.) The land round which Elice, *i.e.* the Ursa Major, wheels, is that to the north, whence the barbarians came. Her son—Bootes. A most bitter reproach is conveyed in this contrast of the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem with the injustice, the disunion, and the madness of the Florentine people.

50. *Fringed with another's light, and their own smile.*

i.e. Adorned with the light of God, and the smile of their own happy features. The picture given in these three lines—elegant from their very simplicity—is an instance of Dante's peculiar and inimitable manner.

56. *Turn'd round unto my Lady to inquire.*

Beatrice had returned to her seat, "in the highest grade of the third circle of the Rose." (See line 67.) The old man (line 60) is St. Bernard, clad in the white robes of the Saints. The description of him is similar to that of Cato, (*Purg.* i. 31.)

81. *Hast left Hell's precincts with thy footsteps traced.*

Beatrice went down to Limbo to persuade Virgil to assist Dante. (*Inf.* ii. 52.) The slavery from which she had released Dante was that of his own passions. (See *Purg.* xxx. 136.)

103. *Like one who from Croatia come to see.*

Croatia, a province adjoining Sclavonia.—The Veronica is a picture of Christ supposed to have been miraculously imprinted upon a handkerchief preserved in the Church of St. Peter at Rome.

116. *Until the Queen upon her throne thou seest.*

The Virgin Mary.

128. *That peaceful Oriflame.*

This term, in its original signification denoting a signal of war, is here applied with the epithet "peaceful" to the Virgin Mary.

CANTO XXXII.

2. *That meditative soul.*

St. Bernard—who is still gazing upon the Virgin Mary. (See end of last canto.) She, having healed the wound that Eve had inflicted on mankind, is represented with the latter sitting at her feet. The rose is divided lengthways into two compartments, consisting of those before, and those after Christ; *i.e.* the Saints of the Old, and of the New Testament.

8. *Is Rachel seated there.*

Wife of Jacob—introduced in the Purgatorio (xxvii. 104) as the type of contemplation. Thus Contemplation and heavenly Wisdom sit together. In the Inferno (ii. 102) Beatrice says that, to assist Dante, she quitted the place where she sat "con l' antica Rachele." Ruth is the person alluded to (line 11) as the ancestress of David, who composed the Miserere, or 51st Psalm, after the murder of Uriah.

23. *Perfect throughout its leaves their ranks maintain.*

The flower is said to be perfect on that side where the leaves or seats are fully occupied by the Saints of the Old Testament.—On the other side (line 25) a vacant space is left for the Saints under the Gospel.—By "Heaven's bright Lady" (line 29) is intended the Virgin Mary.

33. *And, constant still, two years in hell was tried.*

The two years St. John the Baptist is said to have been in Hell, (*i.e.* in Limbo,) are those which intervened between his death and

that of our Saviour, who then liberated him together with other souls. (See note, *Inf.* iv. 53.) Of St. Augustin, St. Francis, and St. Benedict, see x. 120, xi. 50, and xxii. 40, respectively.

39. *Shall equally in this fair garden shine.*

i.e. "The Elect of the New Testament shall equal the number of the Old."—*Biagioli.*

45. *Ere upon choice were founded their volitions.*

i.e. These, being little children, are saved only through the grace of Christ, and upon condition of their having been baptized, &c. (See line 84.)

70. *Wherefore as is the colour of the hair.*

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob:"—*Malachi* i. 2: as referred to by St. Paul; *Romans* ix. 13, who observes: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." "Care must be taken that this doctrine of election is not pushed further than St. Paul appears to have intended by the text, which regards the preference of the Jews to the Gentiles, and not merely the choice of individuals without merit."—*Cary.*

85. *Look now upon the face that chiefly Christ Resembles.*

The face of the Virgin Mary. This is one of the four passages where Christo is made an identical rhyme. (See xii. 75, and note.) By the "holy hearts gifted with wings," (line 90,) are meant the Angels. (See xxxi. 4, 130.)

106. *Him I again thus question'd.*

Meaning St. Bernard.

127. *Beside him sitteth he, who ere he died.*

St. John,—who before he died witnessed the distresses of the Church. (See xi. 32.) At the other side of Adam (line 130) sits Moses.

133. *Opposite Peter, lo, is seated Anna.*

The mother of the Virgin.—Lucia (line 137) or Divine Grace is the same who was sent by Beatrice to rescue Dante when on the brink of the Inferno, (ii. 97.)

CANTO XXXIII.

1. *O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son.*

This beautiful supplication to the Virgin is addressed to her by St. Bernard. "From this short prayer," says Biagioli, "has Petrarch drawn all the beauties which sparkle in his most beautiful canzone beginning, "Vergine bella." (And yet Petrarch pretended to despise Dante.) Chaucer too has copied it:

> "Thou maide and aged mother, daughter of thy Son,
> Thou wel of mercy, &c. *(Second Nonne's Tale.)*

19. *In thee dwells Mercy—Pity dwells in thee.*

Apply these lines to our Saviour, as God and man, and a portrait of Him more just and beautiful cannot be furnished by mortal pencil.

22. *Now he, who from the nethermost abyss.*

i.e. Dante,—who ascending from the abyss of Hell, had beheld the spirits in Purgatory, and Paradise.

40. *Those eyes, so loved of God, and so revered.*

St. Bernard having finished his supplication to the Virgin, she, by a look, returns a favourable answer.

66. *Were swept the traces of the Sybil's lay.*

See *Virgil, Æn.* iii. 145.

78. *Had I shrunk back, and turn'd mine eyes away.*

Contrasting the different effects of the material and immaterial Sun, the author of the Ottimo Commento says, "that the one dazzles and overpowers, while the other strengthens and assimilates to itself." "Herein is the excellency of this Sun, that He illuminates not only the object, but the faculty;—doth not only reveal the mysteries of this kingdom, but opens blind eyes to behold them."—*Archbishop Leighton.*

82. *O plenteous Grace—whence I presumed to cast.*

"By this exclamation in praise of the divine Grace, he gives us to understand that he assumed the above boldness, not through confidence in his own powers, but through the aid of this divine Grace."—*Lombardi.*

88. *Substance, and accident.*

Substance, that which subsists of itself—accident, that which subsists in dependence on another.

91. *The form entire I saw, as I believe.*

i.e. "One moment, elapsed after the vision, occasioned a greater forgetfulness of what he had seen, than the five and twenty centuries elapsed since the Argonautic expedition, had occasioned of that event."—*Lombardi.*

109. *Not, that the living Light I look'd on, wore.*

Before he proceeds with the description, beginning line 115, "Within that Essence," he anticipates an objection that might be made, "Not that the living Light," &c.; *i.e.* "Let it not be

thought that in God was any change of aspect, since He is immutable; but know, that owing to the strength my eyes acquired by contemplation, I saw him more clearly revealed; and distinguished three circles, representing the three Persons of the Trinity."

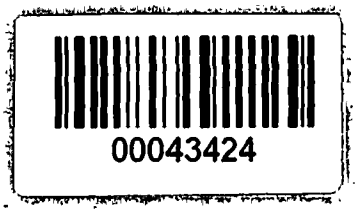
136. *Such was my state, when that new sight I saw:*

i.e. "Such was my anxiety to comprehend how the Divine nature of Christ could contain the human."—This mystery, which his "own wings," viz. his own powers, were unable to attain, is revealed to him by a flash of splendour; *i.e.* by an extraordinary infusion of Divine Grace.

142. *The glorious Vision here my powers o'ercame.*

i.e. "Here failed the power of imprinting on my memory the image of the lofty objects I had seen."—*Lombardi.* Allusion is made to the opening of the poem, where he declared he had seen things not lawful for man to relate, and above the strength of the memory to bear. (See note, i. 7.) Having attained a sight of our Saviour, all his desires are satisfied, and his will is identified with the will of God. "When we converse with a light greater than the Sun, and taste a sweetness more delicious than the dew of heaven, and in our thoughts entertain the nourishments and harmony of that atonement which reconciles God to man, and man to felicity, it will be more easily pardoned, if we should be like persons that admire much, and say little: and indeed we can but confess the glories of the Lord by dazzled eyes, and a stammering tongue, and a heart overcharged with the miracles of His Infinity."—*Jeremy Taylor. The Miracles of the Divine Mercy.*

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